SERMONS

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS,

VIZ.

Of the Glory of GOD.
Of GOD's being the Father of Mankind.
Of being the Children of GOD.
Of Loving GOD.
Of the Fear of GOD.
Of the Wiſdom of being Religious.
Of Imitating the Holineſs of GOD.
Of the Love of GOD towards Sinners.
Of Believing in GOD.
Of the Grace of GOD.
Of the Kingdom of GOD.

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CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

SERM.

CONTENTS.

SERMON

SERMON I.

Of the GLORY *of* GOD.

1 COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

SERM. I.

THE Deſign of the Apoſtle in this chapter, is to preſs upon Chriſtians the great Obligation they are under, to walk *worthy of their holy vocation*; to walk *worthy of* God, as he elſewhere expreſſes it, (1 *Th.* ii. 12.) to live as becometh *the Goſpel of Chriſt*; to behave themſelves in ſuch a manner, as may do *honour* to their religion, may give *Credit*

SERM. I. *and Reputation* to their Profeſſion; In a word, that they be ſollicitous above all things to promote the *Glory of God*, and the *Salvation of Men*; to bring over *Unbelievers*, to the acknowledgment of the Truth; and to prevent, as far as poſſible, thoſe who *Do believe*, from being in any manner offended and diſcouraged in their Duty, or by any means tempted and ſeduced into Sin.

THE Great Temptation in the Apoſtles days, was that of relapſing into the Heathen Idolatry; either *directly*, into the groſs Acts of this Sin, through Fear of Perſecution; or *conſequentially*, into the Snare of a defiled Conſcience, by preſumptuouſly miſunderſtanding the true Bounds of what was lawful and innocent. Againſt *Both* theſe, St *Paul* gives diligent Caution in This chapter. Againſt falling into *direct* Idolatry through fear of Perſecution, he exhorts the *Corinthians* by the following Argument, *ver.* 13. *There has no Temptation*, ſays he, *taken you, but ſuch as is common to Man: But God is Faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may*

SERM. I.

may be able to bear it: Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from Idolatry. To ſtrengthen which Argument, he proceeds in the *next* Verſes, to repreſent to them the *Greatneſs* of the Sin; by ſhowing them diſtinctly, under a plain and obvious Similitude, *what* Idolatry was. *Ver.* 15. *I ſpeak*, ſaith he, *as to Wiſe men; judge ye what I ſay.* He does not inſiſt merely upon his own *Authority*, though it was no leſs than Apoſtolical; as Others, who have no ſuch Claim, are frequently too apt to do: He does not require of them to ſubmit implicitly to what he ſays, without firſt conſidering whether it was right or no: But he exhorts them to make uſe of their own Reaſon and Underſtanding: *I ſpeak*, ſays he, *as to Wiſe*, (that is,) to *Senſible and Reaſonable* Men; *Judge ye what I ſay:* Conſider, if what I now propoſe to you, be not a reaſonable and concluſive Argument. *The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt?* that is, is it not a profeſſing ourſelves to be Diſciples of *Chriſt*? to be *Members* of his *Body*? ver. 16. *For we*, ſays he, *being Many, are one Bread and one Body.* In like manner, he ſpeaks of *Iſrael af-*

SERM. I. *ter the fleſh, Are not they which eat of the Sacrifices partakers of the Altar?* that is, is not This a declaring themſelves to be Diſciples of *Moſes?* ver. 18. By the ſame Argument therefore; being *partakers*, ſaith he, *of the Table of Devils*, by eating of the Sacrifices in the Idol-Temple, *ver.* 21; is, in reality, to communicate in the Guilt, of the Heathen-Idolatry.

AGAINST the *next* danger, *viz.* that of falling *conſequentially*, into the Snare of a defiled Conſcience, by preſumptuouſly miſunderſtanding the true Bounds of what was lawful and innocent; Againſt *This*, he cautions them in the remaining part of the chapter. An *Idol*, every well inſtructed Chriſtian knew to be *Nothing in the World*: As to *Meats* therefore, offered in ſacrifice to Idols: the *good Creatures of God* could not be defiled, by the imaginary Superſtitions of *vain Men*. And therefore Chriſtians, provided *They themſelves* bore no part in the Heathen-*worſhip*, were not obliged to make any Inquiry, whether Meats ſold in the Markets, or ſet before them at any Friend's houſe, had by *Others* been dedicated to Superſtitious Uſe, *ver.* 25, 27. Nevertheleſs,

theleſs, though as to Thoſe who *had* this Underſtanding, the Matter was clear; yet, if any *ſcrupulous and weaker* Brother was diſſatisfied as to the Lawfulneſs of This Practiſe, in *ſuch caſe* they were bound to abſtain: Bound, not by any obligation upon their *own* Conſcience, but out of Tenderneſs and Regard to *His*, ver. 28, 29. Leſt by *Their* needleſſly doing what was innocent to *Themſelves*, *He* ſhould be incouraged to do the ſame thing which was *not* innocent to *Him*: In which caſe, it was much more *material*, and of *greater importance to the Honour of Religion*, that they ſhould *avoid* offending his *Conſcience*, than that they ſhould unſeaſonably aſſert *their* own *Liberty*. Ver. 23. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* The Meaning is; All things that are *lawful for a man to do*, 'tis not conſequently for the Intereſt of Religion that he *ſhould do* them, if it ſo happens that *other* Mens Conſciences be not therein ſatisfied as well as his *own*. For *That* is moſt for the True intereſt of Religion, which tends moſt towards making all men act with a good

SERM. I. conſcience. *Ver.* 24. *Let no man* therefore *ſeek his own, but every Man another's Wealth:* That is; be not ſo much ſollicitous to keep up the full Extent of your own innocent Liberty, as to do That which will more generally and effectually prevent Men's falling into Sin. This ought always to be the main End, the great and prevailing conſideration, in every Action of a good Chriſtian; *what* will moſt tend to promote the Kingdom of God, the Practiſe of univerſal Righteouſneſs and Truth amongſt Men. In order to *This* End, it is not indeed Lawful to do any thing that is *Evil*, but it is at any time very commendable to forbear doing what is *innocent*. *This* End, all our *Great and Religious* Actions ought always *actually and directly* to aim at; and all our *ſmaller and indifferent* Actions, ought by a *general and habitual* intention, to have the ſame Tendency. For ſo the Apoſtle concludes his *whole* Diſcourſe, in the words of the Text; *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do All to the Glory of God: Give none Offenſe, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: Even as I pleaſe all men in all things,*

things, not ſeeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of Many, that they may be ſaved.

SERM. I.

THE words of the Text, contain a Doctrine of the higheſt importance in Religion; And therefore, in the following Diſcourſe upon them, I ſhall more largely and diſtinctly conſider; 1*ſt*, What is the true meaning, and full Intent, of that Phraſe which we ſo often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God:* And 2*dly*, What it is, that is required of men in Practiſe, in order to their ſatisfying the Precept in the Text; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do All to the Glory of God.*

I. As to the true meaning, of that Phraſe which we ſo often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God:* 'Tis to be obſerved that the

1*ſt* and original Signification of it, is to denote to us the *Eſſence*, the *Perſon*, or the *Majeſty* of God; that is, *God himſelf*, who is the *Fountain of Glory*. Thus 2 *Pet.* i. 17. *There came to him*, (to our Saviour at his Baptiſm,) *ſuch a Voice from the* Excellent Glory: From *the Excellent Glory*, that is, from *God*, his *Father*; as 'tis literally expreſſed, in the very ſame

SERM. I. Verſe. In *This* ſenſe, the Name *of God*, the *Majeſty on High*, and ſome other ſuch Phraſes, are alſo uſed in the like manner, to ſignify *God himſelf*. And, *ſitting on the right hand of* Power, Matt. xxvi. 64. is, ſitting at the right hand of *God*, who Alone has properly *All Power*.

2*dly*, THIS phraſe, *the Glory of God*, ſignifies in the *next* place, the Manifeſtation of God's Perfections or Attributes, by the *external Exerciſe* of them towards his *Creatures*. God, was eſſentially Happy, before any thing was created, in the injoyment of his own unſpeakable Perfections: But the *Manifeſtation* of the Glory of thoſe Perfections, and the *Communication* of Good to *Others*, could not be till the Creation of Things. Hence the Prophet *Iſaiah*, repreſents God Thus ſpeaking, (*ch.* xliii. 7.) *I have created him* for my Glory, *I have formed him, yea I have made him*. In *Alluſion* to which expreſſion it may probably be ſuppoſed to be, that St *Paul* ſays, 1 *Cor.* xi. 7. that *Man is the Image and* Glory *of God*.

AND becauſe in *every one* of the divine Perfections *in particular*, when manifeſted *ſingly* in their proper and reſpective Acts,

Acts, there is ſomething *diſtinctly* worthy of Adoration and Praiſe; 'tis therefore not unfrequent in Scripture, to expreſs any *one* of thoſe Perfections ſingly, by the Title of the *Glory of God.* Thus concerning the Divine Power, *Pſ.* xix. 1. *The Heavens declare the* Glory *of God*, (that is, they ſhow forth unto Men the *Power* of God in *creating*, and his *Wiſdom* in *diſpoſing* things;) *and the Firmament ſheweth his handy-work.* And *Joh.* xi. 4, 40. *This Sickneſs* of Lazarus, ſaith our Lord, *is not unto Death, but for the* Glory *of God*, ——that *thou ſhouldſt ſee the* Glory *of God*,——*and that the* Son of God *might be* glorified *thereby:* The Meaning is; It was intended for a manifeſtation of God's *Power* to raiſe the dead, and of his having *communicated* That Power alſo to the *Son of Man.* And here we may obſerve, by the way, that the Tyranny indeed of *weak and vain Mortals*, is apt to take pleaſure in *Power* for *Power's ſake*; and their great Complacency and *Glory* is, in being able to exerciſe it arbitrarily and without reaſon. But *God*, whoſe Power is truly *infinite*, makes it His *Glory* to exerciſe Power, *only in doing Good*; (for almoſt

SERM. I.

SERM. I. almoſt *all* our Saviour's Miracles, were Acts of *Beneficence* as well as of *Power*;) or at leaſt, if the Subject is not capable of *Good*, yet the Exerciſe of his Power, even in Acts of *Severity*, is according to *Juſtice* always. *Rom.* ix. 22. *What if God, willing-----to make his* Power *known, endured with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of Wrath fitted to deſtruction!* He did not ſhow his abſolute *Power*, in *fitting* a certain Number of men *to deſtruction*; as Some have abſurdly underſtood this Text, directly contrary to the words themſelves; but he ſhowed his *Power* in *juſtly* puniſhing Thoſe, who after *much long-ſuffering* and forbearance with them, appeared finally *fit* for nothing but *Deſtruction.*

AGAIN: Becauſe Mercy *and* Goodneſs are repreſented in Scripture, as the Attributes wherein God *chiefly delights*; according to that of St *James*, ch. ii. 13. *Mercy rejoiceth againſt Judgment*; or, as it is in the Original, *Mercy* glorieth *over Judgment:* therefore *This* alſo is, in a particular and *emphatical* manner, called *the Glory of God. Rom.* ix. 23. *That he might make known the Riches of his* Glory, *on the veſſels of Mercy:* And *Epheſ.* iii. 16. *That*

That he would grant you, according to the Riches of his Glory, *to be ſtrengthned---- by his Spirit in the inner man.* SERM. I.

IN purſuance of which *ſame* manner of ſpeaking, *Grace* or *Mercy* is by the Evangeliſt called likewiſe the *Glory of* Chriſt; Joh. i. 14. *We beheld his* Glory, *the* Glory *as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace,* (that is, of *Mercy,*) *and Truth.* And even of a *Man*, Prov. xix. 11. *It is his* Glory, ſaith Solomon, *to paſs over a Tranſgreſſion.* And the *Thanks*, which men are bound to return to God for his *free Goodneſs and Compaſſion* towards them, is expreſſed to be accordingly *to the Praiſe of his* Glory; Eph. i. 14. *The redemption of the purchaſed Poſſeſſion, unto the Praiſe of his* Glory. In *This* particular ſenſe, is ſometimes meant That general Obſervation, that the *End* to which God directs All his Actions, is *his own* Glory; Rom. xi. 32. *God hath concluded All under Sin, that he might have* Mercy *upon All.* and Gal. iii. 22.

THUS God's *manifeſting* the ſeveral Attributes and Perfections of his Divine Nature, in the *external Exerciſe* of them towards

SERM. I. towards his *Creatures*; is frequently what the Scripture means by the *Glory of God*.

3*dly*, FROM hence, on the other ſide, the *Return* or *Acknowledgment*, which *Creatures* make again to *God*, for *His* manifeſtations of his Goodneſs to *Them*; is likewiſe in Scripture ſtiled *The Glory of God*, or *Their* giving *Glory to Him*. To *give Glory to God*, is to promote his *Honour* in the World; or to contribute what we can towards keeping up in All men's minds, a juſt *Senſe* of him, and *Regard* towards him.

AND This is done, particularly; by *Worſhipping* him, with *conſtant* and perpetually-returning Acts, of ſolemn *publick Devotion*. *Pſ.* xxix. 1. *Give unto the Lord*, glory *and ſtrength*; *give unto the Lord*, *the* glory *due unto his Name*; worſhip *the Lord*, *in the Beauty of Holineſs*. Thus the *Saints in* Heaven, (Rev. iv. 11.) are repreſented as *worſhipping* God, and ſaying, *Thou art worthy*, *O Lord*, *to receive* Glory *and Honour and Power*; *for Thou haſt created all things*, *and for thy pleaſure they Are*, *and were Created*. And the *Nations of the* Earth are directed accordingly, (ch. xix. 7.)

Fear

Fear God, and give Glory *to him, and wor-* SERM. I.
ſhip him that made Heaven and Earth. Which Worſhip becauſe the Heathen World gave to *Others* inſtead of the True God, even to *Gods which did not make the Heaven and* Jer. x. 11. *the Earth*, as the Prophet deſcribes them; therefore St *Paul* Thus charges them, *Rom.* i. 21. that *when they knew God*, yet *they* glorified *him not as God.*

Again: By *Thanks particularly returned for ſpecial Mercies or Benefits received*, by which we profeſs our Senſe of God's being the Author of thoſe Benefits; is the Honour of God promoted among Men, or *Glory* given unto him. Thus (*Luke* xvii. 18.) when of the ten Lepers that were healed, one only, who was a *Samaritan*, was truly Thankful for the Mercy ſhown him; *There are not found*, ſays our Saviour, *that returned to give* Glory *to God, ſave This Stranger.*

Further: *GLORY* is in like manner ſaid to be given to God, by *Acknowledgment of his Government and Supreme Dominion in the World:* Phil. ii. 11. *That every tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the* Glory *of God the Father*; that is, to the *Honour* of *God*

who

SERM. I. *who exalted him, and who gave him a Name which is above every Name,* by *ſetting him at his own right hand in the Heavenly places.* Thus alſo *Rev.* xi. 13. when great Judgments of God fell upon the idolatrous World, *the remnant* (ſays the Text) *were affrighted, and gave* Glory *to the God of Heaven*; that is, they then acknowledged the True God to be indeed Supreme Governor of the World. For *not acknowledging* of which, but proudly aſſuming to *himſelf* the cauſe of his own Grandeur and Riches, King *Belſhazzar* is thus reproved by *Daniel,* (ch. v. 22.) *Thou, O Belſhazzar, haſt not humbled thine heart, but haſt lifted up thy ſelf againſt the Lord of Heaven; and----the God in whoſe hand thy Breath is, and whoſe are all thy ways, thou haſt* not glorified. And King *Herod,* when, being *arrayed in royal apparel,* he *ſat upon his Throne*; *immediately the Angel of the Lord ſmote him,* Acts xii. 23. *becauſe he gave not God the* Glory; that is, becauſe forgetting his dependance upon God, he ſuffered the People to applaud him as being *himſelf* a *God,* and the Author of his own Greatneſs.

SERM. I.

UPON the ſame Ground, *Confeſſion of paſt Sins*, with true *Humiliation*, and a juſt Senſe of the *Unworthineſs* and *Ungratefulneſs* of Sin; is in Scripture ſtiled *giving* Glory *to God*. Joſh. vii. 19. *Joſhua ſaid to Achan*, who had ſtolen ſome of the accurſed things, and indeavoured to diſſemble it; *My Son, give, I pray thee*, glory *to the Lord God of Iſrael, and make confeſſion unto him:* That is; Acknowledge, that nothing can be concealed from *His* all-ſeeing Eye, and that to *Him* there is no ſecret nor Shadow of Darkneſs, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves.

Actual Repentance, and *Forſaking* of Sin, by *real Amendment*, is ſtill in a higher degree *giving* Glory *to God*, or promoting his Honour. *Rev.* xvi. 9. *Men blaſphemed the Name of God, who hath Power over theſe plagues; and they* repented *not, to give him* Glory.

HABITUAL *Holineſs*, or a *conſtant eſtabliſhed Practiſe of* Virtue, *in the courſe of our Lives*, is yet further, in the *higheſt* degree we are capable, *giving* Glory *to* the *God* of all Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, who is of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity.

SERM. I.

quity. 1 *Cor.* vi. 20. Glorify *God, in your Body, and in your Spirit: Being filled with the Fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, unto the* Glory *and Praiſe of God,* (Phil. i. 11.)

IN a word: *Whatever* tends to the true Honour of Religion, to the promoting and eſtabliſhment of Virtue and Goodneſs among Men; *Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praiſe, theſe* are the things which promote the *Glory* of God. God, is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Holineſs and Goodneſs; a perfectly juſt and righteous, as well as Supreme, Governor of the Univerſe: And the Glory of *ſuch* a Governor, is the eſtabliſhment of his *Moral Kingdom*, the univerſal eſtabliſhment of the *Dominion and Power of Virtue*, in the Wills of all reaſonable and intelligent Creatures. His *natural* Kingdom, is by *Neceſſity*; for the material World *cannot but* obey him: But his *moral* Kingdom which is His *greateſt Glory*, is the Dominion of *Righteouſneſs*

Phil. iv. 8.

ouſneſs and *Virtue*. Hence the Apoſtles, in their Exhortations to the Practiſe of *Any Virtue* whatſoever, frequently urge *This* Argument, that it will be *to the Glory of God*: (Rom. xv. 5.) *God----grant you to be* like-minded *one towards another,-----that ye may* with one mind glorifie *God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. And in the words of the Text; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the* glory *of God*: Do every thing, even the moſt *common* actions of Life, in ſuch a manner, as may *become* the Profeſſors of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and may promote the Honour and Intereſt of Religion. The words are of the ſame import, with thoſe in *Col.* iii. 17. *Whatſoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jeſus*; do every thing ſo as becomes the Diſciples of Chriſt, *giving Thanks to God, even the Father, by Him*; that *God in* all *things may be* glorified, *through Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Pet. iv. 11; or, as 'tis expreſſed, *Tit.* ii. 10. that ye may adorn *the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. To *adorn* the Doctrine of God; is, by your Practiſe to cauſe it to appear *lovely* and *beneficial* to

SERM. I.

SERM. I.

mankind, to ſhow how *glorious* 'tis in its Effects, and how *worthy* to be embraced, and practiſed by all men. This is what the Scripture elſewhere calls, glorifying *the* word *of the Lord*, Acts xiii. 48; *glorifying it*, and cauſing it to *have its* free courſe; ſo St *Paul* explains it, 2 *Th.* iii. 1. 'Tis promoting the intereſt of Religion and Virtue, and the general Salvation of Men; 'Tis ſpreading the *Knowledge* of God, and bringing men over to the *Obedience* of his Commands, in order to their becoming capable of being Partakers of his *Happineſs*. Which *Happineſs and Perfection* of rational Creatures, being the great *End and Deſign* of God's Creation, and what both Nature and Scripture calls the Kingdom *of God*; therefore *whatever* tends to the promoting of Virtue and True Religion in the World, is promoting the Honour and the Glory of God. When Many of the Jews, convinced by our Saviour's Miracles, embraced the Truth of his Doctrine; the Scripture thus expreſſes it, *Mat.* xv. 31. that they glorified *the God of Iſrael*. When our Saviour promiſes his Diſciples, for the further confirmation and eſtabliſhment of their

their Faith, that God would certainly grant them the Petitions they ſhould rightly put up in his Name; he does it in the following manner, *that the Father*, ſays he, *may be* glorified *in the Son*, Joh. xiv. 13. In the 21ſt chapter of the ſame Goſpel, *ver.* 19; becauſe the Teſtimony and the Sufferings of the Martyrs, are one of the principal Means of propagating the True Religion, therefore our Saviour's foretelling in what manner St *Peter* ſhould *die*, is by the Evangeliſt thus expreſt, that our Lord *ſignified by what Death Peter ſhould* glorify God. For the ſame reaſon, the Spreading of the Knowledge of the True God, among the Nations of the World, is by the Prophet called, *ſetting his* Glory *among the Heathen*, Ezek. xxxix. 21. And becauſe Nothing does This more effectually, than the virtuous *Lives* and good *Examples* of thoſe who profeſs the Truth; therefore the Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians*, (2 Cor. iv. 15.) that *the abundant grace* which was in them, did, *thro' the thankſgiving of Many, redound to the* Glory of God. And our Saviour, exhorting his Diſciples to be bright Examples of Virtue to the World, does it in

SERM. I.

SERM. I.

this manner, (Matt. v. 16.) *Let your Light*, ſays he, *ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good works, and* glorify *your Father which is in Heaven.*

ALL that has been ſaid upon This Head, concerning the *Glory of God*, is ſtill further confirmed by the conſideration of the Contrary, what is meant by the *Diſhonour of God.* Literally and ſtrictly ſpeaking, 'tis evident God *cannot be diſhonoured*, becauſe his eſſential *Honour* or Glory is *immutable.* But as the *promoting* of *Virtue and Righteouſneſs*, is *glorifying God*; ſo the bringing any *Reproach* upon *Religion and Goodneſs*, is *diſhonouring of God*, who is the Author of true Religion and the Fountain of Goodneſs. Thus, under the *Old* Teſtament, the Wickedneſs of *Eli*'s Sons, [1 *Sam.* ii. 17.] cauſed *men to* abhor *the offering of the Lord.* And the Sin of *David*, (2 *Sam.* xii. 14.) gave *great occaſion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme.* Upon This ground, *Nehemiah* thus exhorts the Jews at their return from the captivity, (*ch.* v. 9. *Ought ye not to walk in the Fear of our God, becauſe of the* Reproach *of the Heathen our Enemies?* And God complains by the

Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. lii. 5. *They that rule over* my people, oppreſs *them, ſaith the Lord, and* my Name *continually every day is* blaſphemed. And again, by *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxvi. 20. *When they entred unto the Heathen whither they went, they* profaned my Holy Name, *when they ſaid Theſe are the people of the Lord.* SERM. I.

IN the *New* Teſtament, the ſame Argument is urged by St *Paul*, *Rom.* ii. 23. *Through breaking the Law,* diſhonoureſt *thou God? For the Name of God is* blaſphemed *among the Gentiles, through You, as it is written.* And in his *particular Directions* to perſons in *particular Stations*, his exhortation to *young* women is, that by ſober converſation they *give none occaſion to the Adverſary to ſpeak reproachfully*, 1 Tim. v. 14: and that they be *chaſte* and *diſcreet, that the word of God be not blaſphemed*: Tit. ii. 5. And to *young* men, ver. 8. that by their *uncorruptneſs, gravity* and *ſincerity,*——*he that is of the contrary part may be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of them.* And to *Servants*, that they behave themſelves well towards their Maſters, *that the Name of*

SERM. I. *God and his Doctrine be not blaſphemed,* (1 *Tim.* vi. 1.)

THUS have I briefly explained what is in Scripture meant by This phraſe, *The Glory of God*, and our *giving glory* to him. 'Tis promoting the intereſt of *True Virtue and Righteouſneſs* in the World. For as the natural *Kingdom of God* over the *inanimate* Creation, conſiſts in his Exerciſe of *Power and Wiſdom*; ſo the ſpiritual *Kingdom of God* over the *rational* World, conſiſts in the *Obedience of the Wills* of reaſonable Creatures to the *moral and eternal Laws of Righteouſneſs*: And the *Glory of God*, as of *every Good Governour in Proportion*, is the *Goodneſs and Happineſs of his Subjects*. When therefore we ſay that God *does every thing for his own Glory*, and that This is his *Ultimate End*; the meaning is, that his Deſign in all things is the final eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom of univerſal *Righteouſneſs* in the whole Creation. And accordingly when a Man does any Action *becauſe* it is *good and right*, or *forbears* it *becauſe* it is *evil and immoral*; *then* only, and not when he acts upon any *enthuſiaſtick*

ick principles, does he truly *intend the Glory of God.* SERM. I.

THIS in *General.* I ſhould now have proceeded in the 2*d* place, to ſhow *more particularly*, what it is that is required of men in Practiſe, in order to their ſatisfying the Precept in the Text, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* But This, hereafter.

SERMON II.

Of the GLORY *of* GOD.

1 COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

IN Discoursing upon these words, I have proposed to consider, *1st*, what is the True Meaning, and full Intent, of that Phrase which we so often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God*: And *2dly*, What it is, that is required of men in Practise, in order to their satisfying the Precept in the Text. SERM. II.

I. As

SERM. II.

I. As to This Phraſe, which we ſo often meet withal in Scripture, *The Glory of God*; I have ſhown, that it denotes, in its *1ſt* and original Signification, the *Eſſence*, the *Perſon*, or the *Majeſty* of God; that is, *God Himſelf*, who is the *Fountain of Glory*. *2dly*, It ſignifies the *Manifeſtation* of God's Perfections or Attributes, in the *external Exerciſe* of them towards his *Creatures*. And from hence, *3dly*, on the *other* ſide, the *Return* or *Acknowledgment*, which *Creatures* make again to *God*, for *His* manifeſtations of his Goodneſs to *Them*, is likewiſe in Scripture ſtiled, *The Glory of God*, or *Their* giving *Glory to Him*.

THUS far, I have *already* proceeded *in general*. That which *Now* remains, is,

II. To conſider diſtinctly and *particularly*, in the ſeveral Caſes and Circumſtances of Life, *what* it is that is required of men in Practiſe, in order to their ſatisfying the Precept in the Text; *whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.*

AND

SERM. II.

And *1ſt*, HE who will in all things promote the *Glory* of *God*, muſt in the firſt place ſhow forth the Senſe he has of God upon his Mind, by *Acts immediately and directly religious*; by *ſuch* Acts, as are *Profeſſed Acknowledgments* of *our* own Dependence upon God, and *exemplary* to provoke other men, (as the Apoſtle elegantly expreſſes it, *Heb.* x. 24.) *unto Love and to good Works.* Of This Kind, are *publick Prayer* and *Thankſgiving*: Pſ. cvii. 31. *O that men would therefore praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and* declare *the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men! That they would exalt him alſo in the Congregation of the people, and praiſe him in the Seat of the Elders!* By this *publick* Worſhip of *God*, are made the propereſt *Expreſſions* of the Senſe we have of our Dependence upon him; and by this manner of expreſſing it, is That *Senſe itſelf*, the Senſe of God and of Religion upon the Minds of men, moſt effectually kept up and preſerved. Very emphatical is the Deſcription St *John* gives us, of the whole Univerſe joining, in their ſeveral Capacities, to give *Glory* in This manner to their Common Lord:

Rev.

SERM. II.

Rev. v. 13. *Every Creature, which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and ſuch as are in the Sea, and All that are in them heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the Throne.*

2*dly*, HE who, according to the Direction in the Text, will do all things to the *Glory of God*; as he muſt be conſtant in *Acts immediately and directly religious*, ſo he muſt reſolve againſt being at Any time guilty of *Any Action* which is *directly irreligious*. Of This Kind, is *every deliberate Sin*, every Act which is *againſt a man's own Conſcience*, every *known Tranſgreſſion of a Commandment*. Which things, whoſoever is at any time guilty of; far from *doing all to the Glory of God*, he on the contrary, as much as in him lies, *diſhonours* and reproaches him. For wilful Sin, ſinning *preſumptuouſly* or *with a high hand*, (as the Scripture expreſſes it;) is in the Nature of Things a *Diſhonour* to God: *Rom.* ii. 23, *Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the Law, through breaking the Law* diſhonoureſt *thou God?* 'Tis *reproaching* the Lord; or contending, in

in effect, that his Commandments are not wiſe, juſt, and good: *Num.* xv. 30. *The Soul that doth ought preſumptuouſly, the ſame* reproacheth *the Lord, and that Soul ſhall be cut off from among his people.* 'Tis caſting *Contempt* upon his Laws; *Iſ.* v. 24. They have caſt away *the Law of the Lord of Hoſts, and* deſpiſed *the word of the Holy One of Iſrael.* 'Tis *defying* his *Power*; 1 Cor. x. 22. *Do we* provoke *the Lord to jealouſy? are we* ſtronger *than He?* In a word; 'tis profeſſing that we know better what is right and fit for us *ourſelves,* than *he* can judge for us; and therefore that *we will not have* Him *to reign over us.* This is the caſe of preſumptuous Sins; of all Actions, known to be directly and in their own nature *irreligious.* SERM. II.

BUT, not only by Actions *intrinſically* and *in their own* Nature immoral, is God diſhonoured; but alſo by every thing, which in its *Circumſtances* is Evil; by every Act, which either the *Perſon who commits* it, *judges* to be unlawful; or which needleſly gives *Offence* to *Others,* and becomes to *Them* the Cauſe or the Occaſion of Sin. For, the Kingdom of God

SERM. II. God conſiſting in the Prevalency of univerſal Righteouſneſs, Sincerity, and Truth; it follows, that not only by the Practiſe of whatever is *intrinſically immoral*, but alſo by whatever *wounds and defiles the conſcience* either of him who does the Action, or of Others who by the Example of it are led into the Commiſſion of what to Them is Sin; by *every* ſuch thing is God's Kingdom of Righteouſneſs diminiſhed, and the Dominion of Virtue over the Hearts and Wills of Men (which is the *Glory* and the *Delight* of God) is weakned and impaired. For whoever does any thing with a Senſe or Judgment in his own mind, of its being unlawful when he does it; however otherwiſe the Act might poſſibly have been innocent in its own Nature; yet he ſins at That time againſt his own *Conſcience*, and conſequently againſt *God*. And whoever does any thing with a probable Knowledge or Expectation, that his doing it will be a means of deceiving or tempting his *Neighbour* into Sin; however otherwiſe the Action might have been not only innocent *in itſelf*, but innocent alſo to *Him*, becauſe he *knew* it to be ſo; yet in This

caſe, by Uncharitableneſs, he ſins againſt his *Brother*, and conſequently againſt *God*. For, ſince the promoting of Virtue and Goodneſs in the World, is the moſt important of all things; it becomes us at all times, and in all our Actions, to look upon it as our main End. And though the *Perverſeneſs* of *malicious* perſons, who are apt to *miſrepreſent* things, is by no means an Obligation upon any Good man, to forbear doing any thing that he *himſelf* knows to be innocent; yet the *Weakneſs* of *ſincere* and *well-meaning* perſons, who by relying upon *His* Example, might be led to do what would in *Them* be Sin, is a very ſtrong reaſon (unleſs he has otherwiſe ſome *Great* Occaſion or Neceſſity of Acting,) it is (I ſay) in point of *Charity* a very ſtrong reaſon, why he ſhould forbear doing that which would be ſo hurtful to *Them*. Where the thing that gives Offence to Others, and either drives or leads them into Sin, is ſuch as not only upon account of this *Circumſtance* or *Conſequence*, but *intrinſically* alſo and *in its own Nature* is *unlawful*; there the Scripture denounces againſt the Offender the utmoſt *Severity* of Woe, as againſt

SERM. II. againſt a preſumptuous Diſhonourer of God: *Matt.* xviii. 6. *Whoſo ſhall* offend *one of theſe little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea: Wo unto the World, becauſe of Offences; for it muſt needs be that Offences come, but Woe to that man by whom the Offence cometh.* But where the thing done is innocent in itſelf, and only by accidental *conſequence* proves an occaſion of Sin to Others; yet even There, he who foreſees this conſequence and takes not care to prevent it; is in Scripture charged with *Uncharitableneſs* towards the Soul of his *Brother*, if it be a *Fellow-chriſtian* whom he ſo cauſes to offend; or with want of true Concern for the *Glory of God*, if the Offence be given to an *Unbeliever*.

As to the Caſe of *Unbelievers*; the Apoſtles thus exhort, 1 *Pet.* ii. 12. *Have your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles; that ----- they may by your good works which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the day of Viſitation.* Again, 2 *Cor.* viii. 21. *Provide for honeſt things*, (that is, things of *good reputation* as well as lawful,)

ful,) *not only in the ſight of the Lord, but alſo in the ſight of men. Abſtain from all* Appearance *of Evil*, 1 Th. v. 22. *Provide things honeſt*, that is, reputable, *in the ſight of all men*, Rom. xii. 17. *Walk honeſtly towards them that are without*, 1 Th. iv. 12. *Honeſtly*, that is, *wiſely, circumſpectly*, ſo as to afford them *no Objection againſt your religion*; Thus the ſame Apoſtle explains himſelf, *Col.* iv. 5. *Walk in* Wiſdom *towards them that are without.*

As to the caſe of *Fellow-chriſtians*; how the *Glory of God* is to be promoted, by our behaviour towards *Them*; by our taking care to avoid even ſuch *innocent* things, as we ſee likely to lead any of *Them* into Sin, and may be forborn without any *great* inconvenience to *Ourſelves*; the Apoſtle explains himſelf at large, by putting a particular and very remarkable inſtance, in the *chapter whereof my Text is a part*, and in the *eighth chapter of This Epiſtle*, and in the *fourteenth chapter to the* Romans.

THE Caſe he puts, is, whether it was lawful for Chriſtians to eat of ſuch meats, as the Heathen had ſacrificed to their

SERM. II.

Idols. In the *preſent chapter*, whereof my Text is a part, he thus reſolves the queſtion, *ver.* 25, 27. *Whatſoever is ſold in the ſhambles, or ſet before you at a friend's houſe, That eat, asking no queſtion for conſcience ſake*; i. e. Care not, whether the Heathens have ſuperſtitiouſly offered it to their Idols, or not; *For the Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulneſs thereof*; ver. 26. The Meaning is; *God* made *all* things, and every creature of His is good, if it be received with Thankſgiving; nor can any man's Folly and Superſtition make That to be *unclean*, which God has made *clean* to us. *But if any man* ſay *unto you, This is offered in ſacrifice unto Idols*, ver. 28. *then eat* not, *for* his *ſake that ſhewed it*; that is, *forbear* Then, *out of charity to* Him, leaſt *Your* Liberty cauſe *Him* to ſtrain his Conſcience, and ſo fall into Sin. And then he ſums up all in the words of the Text, *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God: Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.*

In

SERM. II.

IN the *eighth chapter* of this epiſtle, he again propoſes and reſolves the *ſame* queſtion: *Ver.* 4. *As concerning the eating things offered in Sacrifice unto Idols, we know that an Idol is nothing in the World, and that there is none Other God but One. Howbeit*, ſaith he, *ver.* 7. *there is not in every man That knowledge: For ſome with conſcience of the Idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an Idol; and their Conſcience, being weak, is defiled.* Wherefore, though in reality, and to a man of underſtanding, the good creatures of God are not at all the worſe, for having by other mens vain and ſenſeleſs ſuperſtition been offered to an Idol; yet *take heed*, ſays the Apoſtle, *ver.* 9. *leſt by any means this Liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak: For if any man ſee Thee which haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the Idols temple, ſhall not the conſcience of Him that is weak, be emboldened*, (in the original it is expreſſed very emphatically, *ſhall he not be* edified,) *to eat thoſe things which are offered to Idols? And through* Thy *knowledge, ſhall the weak Brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died.* And then he concludes, *ver.* 12. *When*

SERM. II.

ye ſin ſo againſt the Brethren, and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt: Wherefore if Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the World ſtandeth, leſt I make my Brother to offend.

Laſtly, THE *ſame* queſtion he again determines, in the *fourteenth chapter* to the *Romans*: *I know*, ſaith he, *ver.* 14. *and am perſwaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf; but to him that* eſteemeth *any thing to be unclean, to Him it is unclean: But if thy Brother be grieved with thy meat, Now thou walkeſt not* charitably: ----- *All things indeed are pure, but 'tis evil for that man who eateth with offence: It is good* therefore, *neither to eat fleſh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother ſtumbleth, or is made weak: Haſt thou Faith? have it to thyſelf before God.* His meaning, in theſe *laſt* words, is; not, (as ſome have wickedly perverted the words,) that provided a man has right notions of religion *himſelf*, he need not openly own and profeſs them before *Others*: But his meaning is, that in things of an *indifferent* nature, (of *which only* he was here ſpeaking,) men of underſtanding had better keep *to themſelves*

ſelves their lawful Liberty, than run the hazard of incouraging *others* to venture further than their Conſciences will innocently permit them. *Haſt thou Faith?* i. e. haſt thou *aſſurance* of the innocency of what thou doſt? *have it to thyſelf before God.* SERM. II.

THE Sum is This: To *do* any *Evil Action*, that *Good* may come of it, is *not lawful*: But to *forbear* any *innocent* action, when ſuch forbearance is the likelieſt means to prevent another man's falling into Sin, is both *lawful* and *commendable*. Nay, the acting otherwiſe, is, in ſuch caſe, *Uncharitableneſs* towards our Brother: *Rom.* xiv. 15. *If thy Brother be* grieved *with thy Meat, Now walkeſt thou* not charitably.

To apply this to *Other* caſes. We affirm, and with great reaſon, that ſuch Uſe of *Images* in religious Worſhip, as the Church of *Rome* injoins, is *direct Idolatry*. But ſuppoſe it were *not*; yet, ſo long as the generality of the people cannot poſſibly pray otherwiſe amongſt them, than *with* Conſcience *of the Idol*, as St *Paul* expreſſes himſelf, 1 *Cor.* viii. 7. 'twould be the greateſt Injuſtice in the world, for

SERM. II.

Them to cauſe their Brethren to periſh, for whom Chriſt died; by impoſing upon them needleſly, and without warrant of Scripture, ſo manifeſt a ſtumbling-block and ſo evident a cauſe of falling into Sin. And the like may be ſaid in proportion, concerning the Violent and Obſtinate Impoſition of *any* dubious doctrine, or *any* dangerous Ceremony, beyond the original Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel. 'Tis chuſing to hazard the Salvation of Men, and to cauſe Diviſions, and Strifes, and unneceſſary Difficulties of Conſcience among the Servants of Chriſt, for the ſake of Pride and Vanity and Love of Dominion over men. Whoever is ſincerely deſirous to *do all things to the Glory of God*; as he will be heartily ſorry for all his *own* Sins and Offences, ſo he will really endeavour, as much as in him lies, to prevent the Sins of *Others*; He will avoid every thing, that may lead them into Sin; he will ſet them an example of Virtue, in the Practice of his own life; he will recommend to them in his Diſcourſe, upon all fair and proper occaſions, the excellency and the reaſonableneſs of Religion; he will

will rejoice and be truly pleaſed, to ſee Virtue, Righteouſneſs, and univerſal Charity, and Good-will, prevail and proſper in the World; he will lead no man into Error, nor be eaſy to ſee any man continue in it; but will wiſh with *Moſes*, that *all* the Lord's people were Prophets; and contribute, as much as in him lies, towards enabling them to be ſo. And, if he be in Power or Authority, he will deſire not to grieve or burden the Conſciences of Men; but will eſteem it of much more importance to unite Chriſtians in the plain Simplicity of the Goſpel, and in the bonds of Righteouſneſs and true Charity; than to eſtabliſh for Himſelf Any Power or Dominion over the Conſciences of his Brethren, either by preſumptuouſly claiming to himſelf a falſe *ſpiritual* Authority which Chriſt has not given him, or antichriſtianly and atheiſtically making uſe of *Temporal Power* to compel or awe men in matters of *Religion*.

THUS have I briefly explained the Two *Primary* and Great Inſtances, wherein conſiſts a man's *doing All things to the Glory of God*. It implies *firſt*, that he

SERM. II. regularly ſhow forth the Senſe he has of God upon his Mind, by *Acts immediately and directly religious*; and 2*dly*, that he reſolves againſt being *at* Any *time* guilty, of Any *Action* which is *directly* Irreligious. But further,

3*dly*, IN all *great* Actions, Actions of *moment and conſequence* in the main courſe of a man's life; although they be *not* ſuch, as have any direct *relation to* Religion; yet ought he *expreſsly* to *intend* the *Glory of God*, as his chief *and* main *end*. He ought to intend the *Glory of God*; that is, the promoting of *Truth and Right, of Juſtice and Goodneſs* in the World. For whatever is *Therefore* choſen, *becauſe* it tends to the promoting of *Virtue and Goodneſs*, is (in the Scripture-ſenſe) done *for the Glory of God:* And whatever is *for That reaſon* avoided, *becauſe* it has, in any manner, a *Tendency to Evil*; is avoided *for the Glory of God*. Now there is no *conſiderable* Action in any man's Life, no Action of *conſequence* and *importance* in the World; but which, even though it has *not any* direct *relation to* Religion, yet ſome way or other has in the whole a Tendency, to promote the Cauſe

Cauſe either of Virtue or of Vice. Such is, for inſtance, a man's chooſing his *Profeſſion*, imployment, or manner of Life in the World. Whatever Profeſſion, though *not* in itſelf directly *unlawful*, yet leads Men needleſsly into many and ſtrong *Temptations* to Sin; will always, if poſſible, and if he is not under any *preſſing* neceſſity, be avoided by a Man who is ſincerely deſirous to do all things to the Glory of God. Every *innocent* Profeſſion, may *equally and indifferently* be choſen by any good Man; But yet, even in *That* Choice, his *main and ultimate* End, will be the Exerciſe of Right and Truth, and the mutual comfortable Support of Men, in Juſtice, Faithfulneſs and Charity. Profit, Power, Credit, Reputation, and the like, may very innocently, and very juſtly be aimed at, by Men in Any buſineſs or imployment whatſoever: But theſe things muſt Always be deſired, with a due Subordination to the Intereſt of Virtue; which is the *Glory* of *God*, and the only true and final *Happineſs* of *Men*. Whoever, in the Great *Lines* and main *Courſe* of his Life, aims merely or principally at worldly and temporal Ends; in

SERM. II.

SERM. II. in the attainment of Thoſe Ends, he *has his Reward.*

4*thly* and *Laſtly*; As in all *Great* Actions, a good Chriſtian ought actually; ſo in all even the *ſmalleſt* and moſt *inconſiderable* Actions of Life, he ought habitually to intend the *Glory of God. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of* God. The Scripture repreſents all, even *irrational* and the very *inanimate* creatures, (*Pſ.* cxlviii. 2, &c.) *Beaſts and all cattle, worms and feathered fowls; the Sun, the Moon and Stars; Mountains and all Hills, fruitful Trees and all Cedars; Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storms*; The Scripture, I ſay, repreſents even All *Theſe* as *glorifying God*, becauſe they act *regularly*, according to the *Nature* he has given them, and by *his* Command. Much *more* then, may even the moſt *common* actions of *Men*, be juſtly ſaid to be *done to the glory of* God; when they are done *decently and ſoberly, regularly and innocently*; as becomes *Men*, and *Chriſtians*, and ſuch as have upon their minds, even when they are not directly thinking of it, an *habitual* Regard to God and Religion. In a *Journey*;

Journey; to a *diligent* Man, and one whoſe mind is really bent upon his journey's End, *every thing* he does, as well as *actual travelling*, tends truly to the ſame End. His *Reſt* and *Sleep*, his *Stops* and *Refreſhments*, nay even his very *Diverſions and Digreſſions*, ſtill tend uniformly, towards enabling him to arrive at his intended Home. And thus likewiſe, in the courſe of a Religious Life; to a Man truly and ſincerely Virtuous, every *Action* of his Life promotes the Honour of Religion, which is the Glory of God; and every *thing* he does, is ſanctified by a Habit of Virtue: His *worldly buſineſs and imployment*, by *Juſtice and Charity* running uniformly through all the parts of it; The *common* Actions of his Life, by *decency and inoffenſiveneſs*; His very *Pleaſures and Diverſions*, by *Innocency and right Intention*. In a word; whatſoever he is doing, he ſtill Always habitually *remembers the End, and* therefore he *never does amiſs*, Eccluſ. vii. 36. SERM. II.

III. THE *Uſes*, which may be drawn by way of Inference from what has been ſaid, are:

1ſt, FROM

SERM. II. 1*ſt*, FROM hence we may learn how *ſevere* a Reproof thoſe perſons juſtly deſerve, who, far from doing *all* things, as the Apoſtle directs, *to the Glory of God*; do, on the contrary, by *Profaneneſs, Unrighteouſneſs and Debauchery*, directly *diſhonour* Him whom they profeſs to ſerve; bringing a *Reproach and Infamy* upon our moſt Holy Religion, and cauſing the Name of God and the Doctrine of Chriſt to be through *Their* means *blaſphemed* among Unbelievers.

2*dly*, THOSE deſerve in the *next* place to be rebuked ſharply, who, though they do not diſhonour God by Acts directly *irreligious*, yet are *careleſs and negligent* in matters of Religion; not much regarding, whether *Truth* or *Errour* prevails in the World; nor being ſollicitous to do *honour* to their religion, and to promote the *ſpreading* of the Doctrine of Chriſt, by ſhowing the *reaſonableneſs* of it, by preſerving the Simplicity and *Purity* of it, and by exhibiting the *Beauty* of it to all Mankind.

3*dly*, AFTER Theſe, are to be reproved ſuch as *have* indeed a *Zeal* for Religion, but *not according to Knowledge*; placing

cing the main Streſs of Religion, in *Forms* and *Ceremonies* unworthy of God; or in *Opinions* and *Notions*, which either through their *obſcurity and unintelligibleneſs*, or by their *diſagreeableneſs* to the *Everlaſting Goſpel*, *to natural Religion and to the Divine Perfections*, hinder, inſtead of promoting, the Glory of God. SERM. II.

4*thly*, EVEN the *Beſt* of Men have need to be admoniſhed, and to be *put in remembrance*, *that they* ſtir up *the Gift of God that is in them*, 2 Tim. i. 6. That they *purge* themſelves continually from every evil work, *that they may bring forth* more *fruit*, Joh. xv. 2. that they be *more and more diligent* in all their Actions, to do every thing to the Glory of God: Not with a ſuperſtitious Anxiety, or burdenſom Preciſeneſs, in things of little moment; but with a cheerful Application of every thing that occurs in Life, to the promoting of Truth and Right, of Reaſon and Virtue among Men. Rejoicing in the Glory of God, and in the eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom of Righteouſneſs; as That wherein conſiſts the Happineſs of the whole Creation, both in

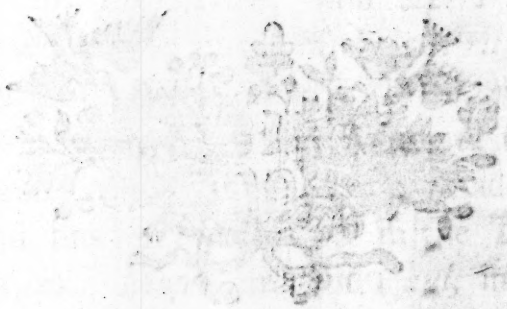
This

SERM. II. This World and in That which is to come.

Laſtly, FROM hence we may learn to comfort and ſatisfy, the minds of ſome *weak* Chriſtians; who, not having a right Notion *What* the Glory of God is, can never aſſure themſelves, that they are *True* Promoters of it. They read that *Moſes* prayed to God to blot *Him* out of his book, if thereby the children of *Iſrael* might be ſaved; and that St *Paul* even *wiſhed* Himſelf *accurſed from Chriſt*, if thereby the Nation of the *Jews* could be converted. And hence *ſome* have put the queſtion to *Themſelves*, and *others* have been ſo weak as to put it in their *Writings*; whether a Chriſtian ought to be *content* to periſh finally, for the Glory of God. The queſtion, is abſurd and contradictory; and has *no* foundation in the Texts referred to. *Moſes*, and St *Paul*, in the circumſtances they were Then in, might charitably, and without any extravagancy, be willing to have born the *temporal* Curſe then coming upon the *Jews*, (which is all that their words mean;) if thereby it could have been poſſible to have ſaved the whole Nation. But ſuch High Expreſſi-

ons of Affection, are always well understood, in *all* books and in *all* languages, to have, not a literal, but a figurative Meaning. A *Chriſtian's* Duty, of doing all things to the *Glory of God*, ſignifies plainly *This only*; that he ought always to prefer the Intereſt of *Religion and Virtue*, before all *Worldly conſiderations* whatſoever. Which that We may All do, *&c.*

SERMON



SERMON III.

Of GOD's being the FATHER *of* Mankind.

MATT. xxiii. 9.

And call no man your Father upon the Earth; For One is your Father which is in Heaven.

IN the following Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow diſtinctly, 1*ſt*, in what Senſe God is in Scripture uſually ſtyled Our *Father*. 2*dly*, What we are to underſtand, when we find it affirmed of him, that he *is in Heaven*. 3*dly*, What is meant, by *calling any man our Father upon the Earth*. SERM. III.

SERM. III.

Earth. And 4*thly*, Why we are forbidden to *call any man Father on the Earth*, upon account of there being *One which is our Father in Heaven.*

I. IN the *First* place; there are *two* Senſes, wherein God is in Scripture uſually ſtiled our *Father.*

1. THE *firſt* is, as he is the *Father* or Author of *all things*, by originally *creating* or giving them Being. In *This* Senſe, the wiſeſt of the Antient *Philoſophers* among the *Heathen*, ſtyled God, *the Father of the Univerſe.* And the *Scripture* ſometimes uſes expreſſions, of the ſame Nature. Thus when St *Paul* had declared, 1 *Cor.* viii. 6. that *To Us there is but One God*; he immediately in the very next words gives a Deſcription who That One God is, by adding; *the Father*, of *whom are all things*; that is to ſay, *from* whom all things derive their exiſtence, and are brought into Being by his Will and Power. The like manner of ſpeaking we find again, *Eph.* iv. 6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all: Father of all*, that is, Author and Creator of all things. So the word is uſed in the *Creed*,

SERM. III.

Creed, when we declare we believe in God, *the Father Almighty*, or, *the Almighty Father*, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. And This is the utmoſt latitude of ſignification, to which the word can poſſibly be extended: it reaching, in *This* ſenſe, to things both *rational* and *irrational*, *animate* and *inanimate*; making God truly and properly, in the fulleſt and moſt literal Senſe, *the Father of the Univerſe*. But *more commonly*, the word is uſed in Scripture in a Senſe ſomewhat more reſtrained, with regard to rational and intelligent Beings; God being peculiarly ſtiled Father, with reſpect to Theſe to whom he has given *Life and Underſtanding*; but Creator *or* Maker only, with reſpect to *inanimate* things, to whom he has communicated only *Simple Being*. Thus *Heb.* xii. 19. The *Father* of *Spirits*: And *Eph.* iii. 15. *The* Father; ----*of whom the whole* Family *in Heaven and Earth is named*. *Father*, and *Family*, are relative Terms; And 'tis a noble Idea, which This Text gives us of God; repreſenting the *whole Univerſe* as the Houſe of God, framed and preſerved by his Power; and all Orders of *intelligent* Beings, as the Family

SERM. III. mily of God, under the Government of his Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs, in their ſeveral and reſpective Stations. In *This* ſenſe, *Angels* are ſtiled the *Sons of God*; Job xxxviii. 7. *The morning-ſtars ſang together, and all the* Sons of God *ſhouted for joy*; that is, the *Angels* rejoiced and praiſed God, at the time of the creation of the viſible World. And the ſame Aſſembly, who are ſtiled the *Hoſt* of Heaven, 1 *Kings* xxii. 19. *(I ſaw the Lord ſitting on his throne, and all the* Hoſt of Heaven *ſtanding by him on his right hand and on his left*;) are, in another deſcription of the like viſion, called the *Sons of God*, Job i. 6. *There was a day when the* Sons of God *came to preſent themſelves before the Lord.* Again, *Dan.* iii. 25. *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaw *four men looſe, walking in the midſt of the fire; and the Form of the Fourth*, ſays he, *is like the Son of God*; or like a *Son of God*, that is, like *an Angel*; as the ſame perſon is ſtiled, *ver.* 28 of that chapter. Upon the ſame account; namely, upon account of having received *Life* from the hands of God, *the Life of an intelligent and rational Being*; our firſt Father *Adam* is called, *The Son of God*,

Luke

Luke iii. 38. which was the Son of *Adam*, which was the Son of *God*. And *all mankind*, conſidered as Creatures endued with Reaſon and Underſtanding; in oppoſition to *Idols*, which have neither Underſtanding, Senſe, nor Life; are ſaid to be *The Off-ſpring* of God, *Acts* xvii. 29. This therefore is the *firſt* and original Senſe, wherein God is in Scripture ſtiled our *Father*. It ſignifies our deriving from him, our *Being* and our *Life*. *All* things are his *Creatures*; but *Intelligent* Beings only, are his *Sons*. SERM. III.

2*dly*, THUS far, God is our *Father* by *Nature*. But 2*dly*, there is ſtill a higher and more peculiar ſenſe, wherein the Scripture repreſents God as being our *Father ſpiritually*, by *religion and grace*. Concerning which, St *Paul* thus ſpeaks, *Rom.* viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father*. The true explication of which Notion, may (I think) rightly be ſet forth in the following manner. As God is in *general* the Father of all *intelligent* and rational Beings, ſo he is in a more *particular* and exalted manner the Father of Him, who in Scripture is ſtiled *The*

SERM. III.

Only-begotten Son; the *Brightneſs of his* Father's *Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon*; the *Image of the Inviſible God*, and *the Firſt-born of every Creature*, Col. i. 15. By the interpoſition of this divine perſon, the only-begotten Son, *it pleaſed the Father*, ſaith St *Paul*, *to reconcile all things unto himſelf*, Col. i. 19. *By Him*, ſaith he, *to reconcile* all *things*, ver. 20. *whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven.* The Meaning is: The whole World of rational Creatures being conſidered as the *Family* of God, (according to that Text before-cited, which declares that *Of Him the whole* Family *in Heaven and in Earth is named*;) the government of this Houſe of God is repreſented by the Apoſtle, as adminiſtred by the only-begotten Son; whom the Father has *given to be the Head over all things*, that *he might gather together in One all things in Chriſt, both which are in Heaven and which are on Earth, even in Him*, Eph. i. 10. By *Sin*, men reject themſelves, and in the divine Juſtice, are rejected out of This houſehold of God, and are no more worthy to be called his Sons. But by True Repentance and Amendment of Life, made available through

Eph. i. 22.

through the Interceſſion of Chriſt our great High-Prieſt; they who *were ſometimes alienated, and Enemies in their Minds by wicked Works*, are again *reconciled*, Col. i. 21. and, *Through Him have acceſs* again *by one Spirit unto the Father*; and *are no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the* Houſehold *of God*, Eph. ii. 18. This Reſtoring of Sinners by Repentance and Reformation of Life, through the Mediation of Chriſt, to the Favour of God; is elegantly ſtiled by St *Paul*, *God our Father's* Adoption *of Children by Jeſus Chriſt to Himſelf*, Eph. i. 2, 5. The Effect of which reconciliation, to thoſe who by the Practiſe of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, continue to live worthy of their moſt Holy Calling; the Effect of it is, that *Chriſt is not aſhamed to call them Brethren*, Heb. ii. 11. that *God himſelf* vouchſafes them the Denomination of *Sons*, 1 *Joh.* iii. 1. *Behold, what manner of Love the Father has beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God*; and that accordingly they have *acceſs* with confidence to the Throne of Grace, as to a merciful and reconciled *Father*; *Gal.* iv. 5. Ye

SERM. III.

SERM. III.

have *received the Adoption of Sons*; *And becauſe ye are Sons, God hath ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying Abba, Father*; *wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son.* In conſequence of this State of Reconciliation, our Saviour in all his Diſcourſes conſtantly repreſents God, as having the tender care and affection of a *Father* towards us: teaches us to acknowledge him and look up to him as our Father, upon account of his continual *Providence* in preſerving us; his *Love*, in revealing himſelf to us by his Son; his *Goodneſs*, in being ready to aſſiſt us with his Spirit; his *Mercy*, in forgiving our Offences; his *Authority*, mixt with the greateſt *Patience*, in correcting us, not, as earthly parents, *after their own pleaſure, but for* Our *Profit*, Heb. xii 10. And, to incourage us to pray to him, he lays before us That moving and moſt pathetick Argument, *Mat.* vii. 11. *If ye being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your children*; *how much more ſhall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* In the Writings indeed of *Some* Authors, God ſeems ſometimes to be repreſented to

us under a different character; as a *hard maſter, expecting to reap where he has not ſown, and to gather where he has not ſtrawed.* But ſuch repreſentations are conſequences only of mens own private Opinions; and not taught, but *reproved*, in Scripture. For God *is* Love; and he loves, and does good to, all his Creatures; and his tender mercies are over all his works. Only againſt wilful *wickedneſs* he is indeed irreconcileably ſevere, and *unrighteouſneſs* is his abhorrence and abomination.

II. HAVING Thus, briefly, explained what the Scripture means, when it ſtyles God our *Father*, proceed now in the 2d place to ſhow *what* we are to underſtand, when we find it affirmed of him that he *is in Heaven.* As if He who is equally in *all* places, could be confined in *Any*; or any proper Habitation could be aſcribed to *Him*, whom *the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain.* Iſ. lxvi. 1. *Thus ſaith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footſtool; Where is the Houſe that ye build unto me? and Where is the place of my Reſt?* The true meaning therefore, when

1 Kings viii. 27.

SERM. III. when God is ſaid to *Be in Heaven*, is to expreſs his *Height and Dignity*; not in *place*, but in *Dominion* and *Power*: It being only a *ſimilitude* drawn into common Speech, from the ſituation of things in Nature. As the Heavenly Bodies, the Sun and Stars, are High above us in *place*; and all Earthly Bleſſings depend on the Sun and Rain and the Deſcent of kindly Influences *literally from above*: ſo, by an eaſy *figure* of Speech, whatſoever is above us *in Power*, we are from hence uſed to repreſent as being above us *in Place*. The Power and Dominion of the King of *Babylon*, is thus ſet forth by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *ch.* xiv. 13. *Thou haſt ſaid in thine Heart, I will aſcend above the Heights of the clouds, I will aſcend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God:* And the *Deſtruction* of his Monarchy is deſcribed after the like manner, *ver.* 12. *How art thou fallen from Heaven!* Thus likewiſe our Saviour ſpeaking of the *Pride* and *Greatneſs* of *Capernaum*; *and thou Capernaum*, ſays he, *which art exalted unto Heaven, ſhalt be brought down to Hell*, Matt. xi. 23. And with Us *Now*, Men's being *High* or *Low* in *Place*, is not meant to expreſs their

their *habitation* upon *Hills* or in Vallies, but the Dignity of their Station in the World. The Greatneſs and Dignity of *our* Saviour's *own* Kingdom, is repreſented in Scripture, by his *ſitting at the* right hand *of God in the* heavenly *places:* We know that God has no Hands, nor any Shape or Figure; But the meaning of Chriſt's ſitting on his right Hand, is, his being exalted next to him in Authority and Power. Thus therefore when we ſpeak likewiſe of *God*, even the inviſible Father himſelf, as being *in Heaven*; it muſt always be underſtood to expreſs his *Supremacy*, not in *Place*, but in *Power and Dominion*; that He is the High and Holy One, Great and Glorious and Supreme above All. SERM. III.

BUT there is alſo *another* reaſon of this expreſſion, of God's being *in Heaven*; To ſignify, that tho' of his real actual *preſence* there is indeed no Confinement, yet of his *Glory and Majeſty* there is in That place a particular and extraordinary *Manifeſtation.* Thus the Archangel in the Book of *Tobit* repreſents it, *ch.* xii. 15. *I am* (ſaith he) *one of the Seven Holy Angels, which go in and out before the* Glory *of the Holy One*;

SERM. III. *One*; and the Salutation to the Churches, which begins the Book of the Revelation, is of the ſame Nature, *ch.* i. 4. *Grace be unto you and Peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the ſeven Spirits which are before his* Throne. The *real* and proper *Preſence* of God, is equally and neceſſarily in *All* places: But his *Throne*, his *Glory*, the place where the righteous ſhall ſee his *Face*, that is, a more particular glorious manifeſtation of his Power and Majeſty; this, is in *Heaven*. In like manner here upon *Earth*; in places, where God has been pleaſed more particularly to manifeſt his Glory, to place his Name There, to receive There the Homage of his Servants; in thoſe places God in Scripture-Phraſe is ſaid to *Be*. Not as if at the ſame time he was not equally in all *other* places alſo: *For in Him we live and move and have our Being*, Acts xvii. 28. And, as *Job* elegantly expreſſes it, *ch.* xxiii. 8. *Behold, I go* forward, *but he is not there*; *and* backward, *but I cannot perceive him*; *On the* left *hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him*; *he hideth himſelf on the* right *hand, that I cannot ſee him*: But the

the Meaning of God's being ſaid to *Be* in *particular places*, is, that in thoſe places he choſe to *manifeſt* himſelf to his Servants, and to receive *Homage from* them. The Patriarch *Jacob*, concerning the place where he firſt ſaw the Viſion of Angels aſcending and deſcending out of Heaven; *ſurely*, ſaith he, *the Lord is in this place*, Gen. xxviii. 16; *and it ſhall be the houſe of God*, ver. 22. In like manner in the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, the *Glory* of God *appeared viſibly*, 2 Chr. vii. 1. and There it alſo was, when it did *not* appear: And how He, whom the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, did thus at that time dwell on Earth, in a Temple made with hands, is in a lively manner expreſſed by *Solomon*, 1 Kings viii. 30. *Hearken thou to the Supplication of thy Servant, and of thy people Iſrael, when they ſhall pray in*, or *towards, this place*; *and hear thou in* Heaven *thy dwelling-place*: The meaning is; God, who is preſent in *every* place, had appointed in *That place* to receive his Tribute of Worſhip. Again; when the Lord appeared to *Moſes* in the Buſh; *the place*, ſays he, *wherein thou ſtandeſt, is Holy Ground*, Exod.

SERM. III.

SERM. III. Exod. iii. 5. Not that *God* himſelf was preſent even Then, in the Buſh, any more than in all other places; but the place was made Holy, by God's manifeſting his *Glory* there; For ſo *St Stephen* expreſsly tells us, *Acts* vii. 30. *There appeared to Moſes an* Angel *of the Lord, in a flame of Fire in the Buſh.*

IN like manner, God is ſaid in Scripture to *dwell in the* Hearts of good men: And that the *Bodies* of them which are ſanctified, are *Temples* of the Holy Ghoſt; God dwelling in them *by* his Holy Spirit: Not by any Confinement of the *Preſence* of God; but by his being pleaſed to ſhow forth the *Power and Influences* of his Holy Spirit, in particular places, and to particular perſons.

III. HAVING thus ſhown at large, what the Scripture means by ſtiling *God* our *Father*, and by affirming him to *be in Heaven*; I am in the 3d place to conſider, what we are to underſtand by *calling any* man *our Father upon the Earth.* And This plainly appears in the Context, from the whole Scope and Deſign of our Saviour's diſcourſe, in the directions he gives to his Diſciples. *The Scribes and*

Phariſees, ſays he, *ſit in Moſes's ſeat*; SERM. III. ---*But do not ye after their works: For they* ---- *love greetings in the Markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi: But be not ye called Rabbi; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt: And call no man your Father upon the Earth; for One is your Father, which is in Heaven: Neither be ye called Maſters; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt.* From hence it clearly appears, that *calling any man our Father upon Earth*, ſignifies, paying to any Earthly Teacher, (not a *due* regard and attention, but) That *deference*, which the Scribes and the Phariſees were by our Saviour reproved for unjuſtly claiming. And the Deference or Regard *they* claimed, was, that men ſhould follow them ignorantly and *implicitly*, in the Traditions they taught. In the Hiſtories of the Antient *Jews* 'tis obſerved, that they frequently preferred the Traditions of their Rabbi's, even before the Writings of the Prophets themſelves. And This Account of them, we find confirmed in Scripture. God complained *of old* by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. xxix. 13. *Their Fear towards me is taught by the Precept of men*;

SERM. III.

men; i. e. Humane Authority had *too much* weight among them, in matters of Religion. In our *Saviour's time*, things were grown to a ſtill higher degree of Corruption in this reſpect: *In vain*, ſays our Lord to the Phariſees, *do they worſhip* God, *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments* (or Inventions) *of* Men, *Mar.* vii. 7. *For, laying aſide the Commandment of God, ye hold the Tradition of Men*, ver. 8. And he repeats it again in the next verſe; *Full well ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition*, ver. 9. *Making the word of God of none effect, through your Tradition which ye have delivered*, ver. 13. The Profeſſors of *Chriſtianity* itſelf quickly began, even in the *earlieſt* times, to fall into ſome degrees of the ſame Fault; as appears by the inſtructions St *Paul* gives to *Titus*, ch. i. 14. *Rebuke them ſharply, that they ----- may not give heed to ----- Fables and* Commandments of Men. Some of theſe Commandments of Men, he particularizes, *Col.* ii. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worſhipping of Angels, intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen, vainly*

vainly puft up by his fleſhly mind. In *af-ter-times*, theſe *Commandments* of Men (as is the nature of all Superſtition) continually multiplied and increaſed; according to the Apoſtle's Prophecy, 2 *Tim.* iv. 3. *The Time*, ſays he, *will come, when they will not endure ſound doctrine*, (that is, they will not be content with the Form of Sound words delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles;) *but after their own luſts ſhall heap up to themſelves Teachers,----and ſhall turn away their ears from the Truth, and ſhall be turned unto Fables.* And the only poſſible way to prevent this Evil, is to conſider, that this aſſumed Authority *of Men* in matters of Faith, prevailed from time to time more and more, till at length it ended in the eſtabliſhment of that Kingdom of This World, which we call *Popiſh religion.* And here I cannot omit to obſerve, that the word *Pope*, the original of which is the old *Greek* word πάππα, ſignifies *Father*; and it ſignifies *Father* in that *very* ſenſe, wherein the Text forbids us to *call any man Father upon Earth.* For by calling a man *Father* here, our Saviour plainly means *having regard to* humane *Authority in mat-*

SERM. III.

SERM. III.

ters of Faith, or in Doctrines of Religion. Which thing, is altogether inconſiſtent with true Chriſtianity; becauſe the *revealed* Will of God, or whatever is *additional* to the law of Nature, is *at once* made known to us *Whole* and *Entire* in the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles. The adhering immoveably to which Rule, the Law of Nature and of the Goſpel; is acknowledging that *One* only *is our Father, which is in Heaven*; and *one* only *our Maſter, which is Chriſt.* All *we*, are *brethren* only; and have *no* Authority to *make* any doctrines of Religion, but only to perſwade and earneſtly exhort men to practiſe what Chriſt has already taught. The *Apoſtles themſelves*, did not take upon them to exceed their Maſter's inſtructions: Much *more* inexcuſable are vain men, who in *later* Ages have been guilty of ſo great and high a preſumption. The Power which the Church of *Rome* has aſſumed, of impoſing Doctrines of Faith, by the Authority of *Popes* and of *general Councils* and *Armies* and *Inquiſitions*; is moſt elegantly deſcribed in Scripture under the character of a *man of Sin, ſitting in the Temple of God*;

2 Theſſ. ii. 4,

SERM. III.

God; that is, in his Church; *exalting himſelf above God, ſhowing himſelf that He is God, ſpeaking great words againſt the moſt High*, and taking upon himſelf to *change Times and Laws*, and commanding *all the World* to *worſhip him*; that is, impoſing upon men by Force, his own Religion. This is the deſcription given us of the Church of *Rome*, in the Prophecies of *Scripture*; and whoſoever *taketh from*, or *addeth to*, the *words of* that inſpired Rule, by endeavouring to ſet up *any* human Authority in matter's of Faith; makes himſelf in proportion a partaker of the Sin, of that great Corruptneſs of the World.

Dan. vii. 25. Rev. xiii. 8.

IV. AND now, having ſufficiently explained what is meant by *calling any man Father upon the Earth*; it will be very obvious to underſtand, in the 4th and laſt place, how the *ground and reaſon* of this prohibition is aſſigned to be This, that *One is our Father which is in Heaven*. For, our *Father in Heaven* having clearly, and fully, preſcribed to us the conditions of Salvation through Chriſt; it follows evidently that They who *call* men *Fathers upon Earth*, that is, who of

SERM. III.

their own Fancies make *other* conditions of Salvation, thereby cauſing Diviſions and Contentions among their Brethren; do in effect ſubvert all true Religion. For, *other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jeſus Chriſt*; that is, the *doctrine* already taught, by *Chriſt Himſelf* and his Apoſtles. If any man *departs from This* foundation, and teaches for doctrines the Commandments of Men; he *forſakes the Fountain of Living waters, and hews him out ciſterns, broken ciſterns that can hold no water*, Jer. ii. 13. Or, as St *Paul* expreſſes it, *Col.* ii. 19. *not holding the Head, from which all the Body has nouriſhment miniſtred*, his religion conſequently is vain. Or if *upon* this true Foundation, he *builds the Hay and Stubble* of unintelligible Speculations, and doctrines uſeleſs in Practiſe, he at leaſt *loſes* great part of his *Reward*, 1 *Cor.* iii. 12, 15. For *This* reaſon, it highly imports all *Chriſtians* to *take heed* how *they hear*, Luk. viii. 18; and diligently to *ſearch the Scriptures*, wherein are *the words of eternal Life*. And they who have Power and Influence over *others*, can never too often recollect, how

1 Cor. iii. 11.

SERM. III.

God complains by the Prophet, concerning the Shepherds of *Iſrael*, that *with Force and with Cruelty have ye ruled*, Ezek. xxxiv. 4; and how our Saviour inſtructs *his* Diſciples, ſaying, *Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exerciſe Dominion over them, and they that are great, exerciſe Authority upon them; But it ſhall not be ſo among you; but whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your Miniſter; and whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; For* even *the Son of Man* himſelf *came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many*, Matt. xx. 25, 26, 28. The Head of the Church of *Rome* profanely ridicules this Text, by ſtiling himſelf the *Servant of the Servants of Chriſt*, at the ſame time that he imperiouſly impoſes upon their Faith his own Doctrines and Creeds, and perſecutes them to death if they ſubmit not to *Him* and his general Councils as *Fathers upon the Earth.* But the *True* Apoſtles of our Lord, did not *ſo learn Chriſt. We preach not ourſelves*, ſaith St *Paul*, *but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord:* Neither *have we Dominion over your Faith,* 2 Cor. iv. 5.

SERM. III.

but are Helpers of your Joy, 2 Cor. i. 24. Thus ſpake the Apoſtles concerning *themſelves*, even though they were *inſpired* perſons, and had a juſt claim to infallibility in Doctrine. How much *more* ought All, who have no pretenſe to ſuch miraculous Gifts, to be of the ſame *meek* Spirit; following the Admonition of St *Peter*, 1 Pet. v. 3. *Feed the flock of God,------not as being* Lords *over God's heritage, but as being enſamples to the Flock:* And That of St *James*, ch. iii. 13. *Who is a wiſe man, and indued with knowledge amongſt you? let him ſhow, out of a good converſation, his works with* meekneſs *of Wiſdom*; and *ver.* 1. of the ſame chapter, *My Brethren, be not many* Maſters: The word in the original, is, *many* Teachers; but our Tranſlators very rightly render it, *Maſters*; becauſe the Apoſtle there ſpeaks of the very ſame kind of haughty and imperious Teachers, againſt whoſe Practiſes our Saviour warns his Diſciples in the Text, and in the words next following: *Be not ye called, Maſters; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt*; and *call no man your Father upon the Earth: for One is your Father*

which

which is in Heaven. Which admonition, that *All* among us may conſtantly attend to, both who *Teach* and *Hear* the Simplicity of the Goſpel; God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.* SERM. III.

SERMON IV.

Of being the CHILDREN *of GOD.*

ROM. viii. 16, 17.

The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God: And if Children then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joynt-Heirs with Chriſt.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words of the Apoſtle, I ſhall indeavour to explain briefly, *1ſt*, What is here meant by our being *Children of God*. *2dly*, What is to be underſtood, by our being

SERM. IV. being ſtiled *Heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Chriſt*. And 3*dly*, How the *Spirit of God*, the *Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with Our Spirit*, if we be good Chriſtians, that theſe Characters do truly belong to us.

1*ſt*, I AM to conſider what is here meant by our being *children of God*. God is in Scripture ſtiled, *The Father of All*; Eph. iv. 6. *One God and Father of All, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.* Here, the title *Father* is applied to him, in reſpect of his giving *Being* to all things, as they are his *Creatures* and the Work of his hands. For though inanimate or irrational creatures can in no Senſe be ſtiled The *Children* of God; yet God, conſidered as the Author of All Being, may properly enough be ſtiled *The Father of the Univerſe*. In a Senſe ſomewhat more reſtrained, and with regard to ſuch Beings, to whom he has given *Life* and *Reaſon* and *Moral* Faculties, God is ſtiled the *Father, of whom the Whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*, Eph. iii. 15. The *Whole Family* of *rational* creatures, *Angels* and *Men*. And Theſe in like manner, upon account of the *living* and

and *rational* nature he has given them, are frequently in Scripture ſtiled *The Sons of God.* By *Sin*, Men forfeit the Benefit of this natural relation to God their Father, and become *Strangers* and *Aliens* and *without God* in the World; being rejected by him, and no longer looked upon as his Sons, but caſt off as Objects of his Wrath and Diſpleaſure. By *Repentance* and *renewed Obedience*, they who are effectually convinced of the Folly and Unreaſonableneſs of Sin, return, as far as in them lies, to their Father's houſe, and deſire to have Acceſs again to his Favour and Mercy. And God, by accepting their Repentance; and pardoning their paſt Sins, according to the gracious Terms and Declarations of the Goſpel; and giving them the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, to ſanctify them for the future; receives them again, as a gracious Father, and *adopts* them for his Sons; (in St *Paul*'s language, gives them *the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father*;) and they become again *fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God.* This is what the Scripture elſewhere calls *Regeneration* or the *New Birth*; and ſometimes,

SERM. IV.

times, the *New Creation*; Deſcribing ſuch perſons, as being in a ſpiritual ſenſe, Created anew *unto good works*; and Born, *not of blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*, Joh. i. 13. *Being* born again, *not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, having, *according to his abundant mercy*, begotten us again *unto a lively hope*, ver. 3. And the plain Meaning of all theſe figurative expreſſions, is; that when a Sinner ſincerely returns to a Senſe of his Duty, and effectually amends his Life; God, who conſidereth whereof we are made, and remembreth that we are but Duſt, pitieth him even as a *Father* pitieth his children; and, though in ſtrictneſs of eſtimation he be indeed no more worthy to be called his Son, yet, upon this his true Repentance, he receives him again to the Arms of his Mercy, and ſays, *Rev.* xxi. 7, *I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son.* Anſwerable to which account of this relative character on *God*'s part, 'tis manifeſt that the Title on *Our* part, of being *children*

of

of God, is expreſſive of the higheſt obligations of *Duty* and *Obedience*, and of our ſtedfaſtly perſevering in the practiſe of all *Virtue* and *Righteouſneſs*. The departing from which originally, as it cauſed thoſe who *by creation* were naturally the Sons of God, to become Strangers and Enemies to him; ſo by returning to it again, and by no other method whatſoever, can they, who through wicked works have been ſtrangers and enemies to God, become again, through the divine Mercy, the Sons of God *by adoption*, and continue to preſerve That character by their perſeverance therein. *In This, the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: Whoſoever does not righteouſneſs, is not of God.*

HAVING thus explained briefly, what the Apoſtle in the text means, by ſtiling us *the children of God*; the next thing I propoſed to conſider, was

2. WHAT we are to underſtand by the following characters; being *Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt: If children, then Heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt.* The word, *children*, being a Title of affection and Love, implies, when

SERM. IV. when uſed in the *figurative* Senſe, an expectation of *favour*, and a dependance for *Support*. Gal. iv. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son; and if a Son, then an* Heir *of God through Chriſt.* The expreſſion is exactly the ſame with That in the Text; *We are the children of God, and, if children, then Heirs.* If the relation of *children* be acknowledged, the very Notion of that relation carries along with it in courſe a Promiſe or Aſſurance of a Bleſſing. And becauſe *God* is infinitely *more able* to provide for thoſe who rely on *Him*, than *earthly Parents* are to make proviſion for their natural Poſterity; and the portion of *God*'s children can by no poſſible misfortune, by no Accident, by no Force, by no Fraud, be taken from them, unleſs, by departing from the commandments of their Heavenly Father, they voluntarily caſt themſelves out of *His* Favour; therefore the inheritance of thoſe *on whom the Father has beſtowed ſuch manner of love, that they ſhould be called the Sons of God*, is in Scripture ſtiled *a Kingdom which cannot be moved, the things which cannot be ſhaken*, a *City which hath foundations*, a *continuing*

Heb. xii. 28, 27.

xi. 10, 13, 14.

SERM. IV.

Acts xx. 32. Col. i. 12. 1 Pet. i. 3.

city, an *inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, the *inheritance of the Saints in Light*, *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away*. And God himſelf, in St *John*'s viſion, ſpeaking from the throne of his glory, thus declares, *Rev.* xxi. 7. *He that overcometh, ſhall* inherit *all things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son.* Here the Title of *Son* or *Child of God*, being uſed as of the ſame import with One that is to inherit *all things*, that is, all thoſe things which God has promiſed to Them that love him; is exactly correſpondent to the Apoſtles manner of ſpeaking in the Text, *If children, then* Heirs. And becauſe the Promiſe of God, who cannot lie, ſtandeth always ſure; ſo that the Reward of Virtue, however at preſent diſtant and inviſible, is yet in reality as Certain in the determinations of the Divine Counſel, as if it was already actually in poſſeſſion; hence St *Paul*, carrying the ſame figure ſtill *higher*, in his deſcription of the Happineſs of thoſe ſincerely religious perſons, whom in the text he ſtiles Heirs *of God*, thus expreſſes himſelf, *Eph.* ii. 5. *God hath quickned us together with Chriſt, and hath*

SERM. IV. *hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit,* (hath *already* made *us ſit*) *together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.* And elſewhere he calls *them, fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the houſhold of God:* And tells them that they *are come,* (that they are already come) *unto Mount Sion, unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem*; and *to an innumerable company of Angels,* and *to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect,* and *to Jeſus the Mediatour of the New Covenant,* and *to God the Judge of All.*

THIS is the full meaning of that *Second* character, given in the Text to ſincere Chriſtians; that they are *Heirs of God*; Heirs of his *Promiſes,* and *Kingdom.*

IT follows; *And Joint-Heirs with Chriſt: Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Chriſt.* The ſenſe of which expreſſion, is this. Though *Men,* as well as all ſuperiour rational Creatures, are originally by Creation the Children of God; and ſo long as they continue to obey the Law of their Nature and the Commands of God, cannot fail conſequently to continue in his Favour: And though *Sinners,*

ners, when they ſincerely repent and a- SERM. mend, have good and reaſonable Grounds, IV. from the conſideration of God's natural Perfections, to hope for Mercy and Compaſſion at his hands: Yet neither to *Sinners* is God under any obligation of *Juſtice*, to reſtore them upon their Repentance to the *ſame ſtate of Favour* as if they had never ſinned; nor even to the moſt *innocent* and perfectly *Sinleſs* Creatures (if any ſuch there were,) is he under Any natural obligation to confer *Immortality* and an *eternal Kingdom of Glory*. All, that *Juſtice* in That caſe requires, is, to diſtinguiſh them according to their Deſerts, in That rank of the Creation wherein their natural Capacities placed them, and for ſuch a Space of Time as the original good pleaſure of the Creator allotted them. The Being which God freely gave, he may at any time, without any injuſtice, take away: And no Creature, even *without* conſideration of *Sin*, has any more claim of Right to continue for ever, or even for any limited time to be exalted above the natural improvement of its original capacities, than it had any Right to be created

SERM. IV.

Before it was; or to have been made in Any *Higher* Species of Creatures. *Eternal Life* therefore, or the *Kingdom of Heaven*, is the *Gift* of God; not due to Mankind by *Nature*, not a Claim of *Right*; no, not even if they had continued Innocent; much leſs, to returning *Sinners*; but 'tis the *Gift*, the *Free Gift* of God, originally in the State of *Innocence*; and to *Penitents* ſtill much more, is it merely a *Free Gift*, in and through *Chriſt*. *That which is born of the Fleſh, is Fleſh*; and has no title, no claim of Right, *naturally*, to the *Spiritual Kingdom* of God. But the Father has appointed unto his Son Jeſus Chriſt a Kingdom; and *I*, ſays our Lord to his Diſciples, *appoint unto You a Kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto Me:* That *whoſoever overcometh*, (that is, whoſoever prevails over the ſinful Temptations of the World,) may *ſit down with Me in* My *Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſat down with my Father in* His *Throne*. By *Nature*, we are only in general the *Creatures* of the Almighty, and the *Works* of his Hands. By *Sin*, we were become Objects of his *Wrath* and *Diſpleaſure*. By obeying the gracious Terms of the *Goſpel*

of

SERM. IV.

of Chriſt, we are *not only* reſtored again to the Favour of God, as of a merciful and tender Father; but our nature is moreover *exalted* by him to ſome ſimilitude with *His*, who was in a ſingular manner the *Son of God*, and yet condeſcended to become our Elder Brother, by being made in the likeneſs of *Men*. *He* voluntarily became himſelf the *Son of* Man; and *as many as received him, to them gave he power that* They *ſhould become the* Sons of God. He has received them as *Joint Heirs* with himſelf, in his Father's Kingdom; And God, even *the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, *has* begotten *them again* (as St *Peter* expreſſes it) *unto a lively hope*, (that is, unto the Hope of eternal Life,) *by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead*. He hath cauſed them to be *conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the Firſt-born among Many Brethren*. And *for this cauſe*, ſaith St *Paul*, *Heb.* ii. 11. Chriſt *is not aſhamed to call them brethren*. Nay, the ſame Apoſtle, in a moſt elegant and lively manner, carrying the ſame figure of ſpeech ſtill higher, *Eph.* v. 30. *We are members*, ſays he, *of his Bo-*

SERM. IV.

dy, of his Fleſh and of his Bones. Thoſe who never had the Knowledge of the Goſpel, are God's children by *creation*; in ſuch a ſenſe as St *Luke* ſays of *Adam*, that he was the *Son of God.* And with regard to Theſe, the *Judge of the whole Earth will do what is Right*, and *with Equity ſhall he judge the Nations.* But as to his *Free Gifts*, he is ſtill always at liberty to do what he pleaſes with his own: And in that Kingdom which he has appointed to his Son Jeſus Chriſt, he may appoint whom he himſelf thinks fit, to ſit on his right hand and on his left. He may *have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion.* The meaning is; not, that God will act arbitrarily and without Reaſon; as ſome have abſurdly underſtood theſe words: But that He, and He only, is the competent, proper, and unerring Judge, upon what Perſons, and on what Conditions, 'tis fit for him to beſtow his Favours. And in and through Chriſt, he may give power, upon what Terms and Conditions he pleaſes, to ſuch as ſhall attain to thoſe Conditions, to become in a *peculiar* manner the *Children*

dren of God; and *if Children, then Heirs*; *Heirs of God, and Joint Heirs with Chriſt.* SERM. IV.

IT remains, in the

3*d* and laſt place, THAT I conſider in what ſenſe the Apoſtle here affirms, that the *Spirit of God*, the *Spirit itſelf*, *beareth witneſs with Our Spirit*, if we be good Chriſtians, that theſe Characters do truly belong to us. For the clearer explication of which aſſertion, I obſerve

1*ſt*, THAT nothing can be more abſurd, nothing can be more contrary to the Whole Tenour of the Goſpel, than the Notions of thoſe men, who take their own *Enthuſiaſtick imaginations* to be the Teſtimony of the Spirit of God. Such perſons judge not of the Tree, by its Fruit; They compare not the Courſe of their Lives, with the Rule of God's Commandments; They judge not of their being ſpiritual perſons, or having the Spirit of Chriſt, by their practiſe of thoſe Virtues, which the Scripture calls *bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit*; But they have a ſtrong, confident Conceit, that they are the elect, the choſen people of God; and the mere ſtrength of this groundleſs imagination, they apprehend to be *the Spirit of God*

SERM. IV. *bearing witneſs with their Spirit, that they are the Children of God.* But This is ſo ſenſeleſs a notion, ſo manifeſtly deſtructive of all Virtue, and of all the true difference between Good and Evil; that it needs barely be mentioned among perſons of common Underſtanding, to expoſe the Folly of it. Wherefore

2*dly*, IN the *Apoſtles days*, the *miraculous Gifts* and *Graces of the Spirit*, made evident by their *real* and *viſible* Effects, as in That great Inſtance of the Gift of Tongues beſtowed as upon This day, were undeniable Teſtimonies, of the Spirit of God being given to thoſe perſons, in whom thoſe Effects appeared. Not that all who were endued even with miraculous Gifts, were conſequently good and ſincere Chriſtians: But theſe Gifts, to thoſe who beheld them, were evident Atteſtations of the Spirit, to the Truth of the *Goſpel*; And to the *Perſons themſelves*, on whom thoſe Gifts were beſtowed. If they were conſcious in their own Hearts of their being ſincere in their Profeſſion, and virtuous in their Practiſe, then theſe Gifts were indeed *the Spirit of God bearing witneſs with Their Spirit, that*

that they were the Children of God. But 3*dly*, BOTH in the *Apoſtles days*, and in *all ſucceeding generations*, even to the end of the World; the ſeveral *Declarations* which the Spirit of God hath made, by the *Prophets* in the *Old* Teſtament, and by *Chriſt and his Apoſtles* in the *New*; compared with the verdict of our own Conſciences, concerning the agreeableneſs of our Actions to thoſe declarations; theſe are the Teſtimony of *the Spirit itſelf bearing witneſs with Our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.* The Promiſes of God made to men in Chriſt, and eſtabliſhed upon the Terms of the Goſpel, are repreſented in the *New Teſtament* as being *Sealed*, or *confirmed by Covenant*, to us in Baptiſm: And therefore, ſpeaking concerning Baptized Converts, 2 *Cor.* i. 22. *God*, ſaith St *Paul*, *hath alſo* Sealed *us, and given the Earneſt of the Spirit in our Hearts.* Conſequently they who *make good* This obligation, by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit in the ſuitable Practiſe of a Virtuous Life; Theſe *have* the *Seal* or *Earneſt* of the Spirit: 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. *The Foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having This* Seal, ---- *Let every one*

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. *that nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity*: And, *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are* Sealed *unto the day of Redemption.* The Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, is, in the language of the text, the *Witneſs of our* own *Spirit*; And the Agreement of this Teſtimony of our own Conſcience, with the Revealed Declarations of the Will of God, when carefully and duly compared together, is what the Apoſtle here ſtiles the *Spirit of God bearing witneſs with Our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.*

BY this *One* obſervation, the whole Diſcourſe of the Apoſtle in this chapter becomes very plain and intelligible: And at the ſame time, by the *whole* tenour of his diſcourſe in this chapter, is *this* clearly confirmed to be the true meaning of the Text. *Ver.* 1. *There is now*, ſays he, *no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus; who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit*: That is, who are guilty of no debauchery or vicious Practices, but live in the regular practiſe of thoſe moral virtues, which he elſewhere by name calls *the Fruits of the Spirit*. *For to be carnally* (that is, vici-

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ouſly) *minded*, (ver. 6.) *is death*; *but to be ſpiritually* (that is, virtuouſly) *minded, is life and peace.* Ver. 8. *So then they that are in the Fleſh*, (they that are under the power, and live in the practiſe, of any known Sin,) *cannot pleaſe God:* And *if any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt*, (that is, if any man who profeſſeth the Name of Chriſt, yet *departeth not from iniquity*, which is the *Seal* upon which the *Foundation* or Covenant *of God ſtandeth ſure*; If any man in This ſenſe *hath not the Spirit of Chriſt*,) *he is none of his. For if ye live after the Fleſh*, ver. 13. *ye ſhall die*; *but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God*, (that is, as many as are prevailed upon by the Motives of the Goſpel to live anſwerably to their Holy profeſſion,) *they are the Sons of God*, ver. 14. And that they *are* ſo, they may certainly know, by theſe Fruits *of the Spirit* appearing in the whole courſe of their *lives*, compared with the Declarations *of the Spirit* made in the *Goſpel*; even as certainly as a Tree is known by its Fruit. For Thus, adds the Apoſtle in the Text, *the Spirit itſelf* SERM. IV. Ver. 9.

beareth

SERM. IV. *beareth witneſs with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God; and if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint Heirs with Chriſt; if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may be alſo glorified together.*

THE reaſon of his annexing theſe *laſt* words concerning our *Suffering* with Chriſt, is, becauſe in the whole Syſtem of moral Virtues which are the Fruits of the Spirit, there is no one that affords a more certain Mark or Teſtimony of Sincerity; there is no one, to which a man's own *Spirit* or Conſcience beareth witneſs with more confidence, or to which All the Declarations of the *Spirit of* God bear witneſs with greater Clearneſs and Aſſurance; than to this virtue of Chuſing to run the hazard of Suffering at any time for Truth and Righteouſneſs. 2 Tim. ii. 11. *It is a* faithful *Saying, If we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; If we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him.* Wherefore, *think it not ſtrange,* ——ſaith St *Peter*, but *rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Chriſt's Sufferings, that when his glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding*

1 Pet. iv. 13.

ceeding Joy. In the Apoſtles days, *ſuffering for* or *with Chriſt*, ſignified being *perſecuted* for the Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity* in *general*. In later Ages, ſince the religion of Chriſt has in *Name* and *Form* been profeſſed among the Nations, Perſecution has more frequently been brought upon men for adhering to ſome *particular* Truths, and for oppoſing ſome *particular* Corruptions in practiſe. For, not only the Apoſtles ſuffered in *Their* days, but many alſo of the Beſt men in *our* days, yea, *and All*, in *All* days, ſays the Apoſtle St *Paul*, *that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſhall *ſuffer perſecution*. But whether they be perſecuted by *men*, or no; yet if by ſtedfaſtly reſiſting the Temptations of Sin, they *be planted together* with Chriſt *in the likeneſs of his Death*, *they ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin. Now if we be dead with Chriſt, we believe that we ſhall alſo live with him*, Rom. vi. 5, 6, 8. This is what the *Spirit of God* conſtantly and uniformly declares and teſtifies, through the

SERM. IV.

the whole Scripture. And therefore they who by *theſe* declarations, and by the conſideration of *theſe* religious motives, are influenced to live in ſuch manner, as that they can ſay with St *Paul*, *Our rejoicing is This, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity —— we have had our converſation in the world*; Theſe, as often as they compare their *own* hearts and actions, with the things that *God* has revealed unto us by his *Spirit*; have, according to the expreſſion in the Text, the *Spirit of God bearing witneſs with* Their *Spirit, that they are the Children of God.*

SERMON

SERMON V.

Of Loving GOD.

MATT. xxii. 37, 38.

Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; This is the Firſt and Great Commandment.

IN theſe words there is obſervable; *1ſt*, The *Duty* injoined; *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God*: *2dly*, The *Circumſtances* requiſite, to make the performance of this Duty *acceptable and*

SERM. V. *complete*; Thou ſhalt love him, *with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*: 3*dly*, The *Weight*, and *Importance*, of the Duty; It is *the Firſt and Great Commandment*.

I. THE Duty injoined, is, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God*. A Duty, in *every man*'s mouth, of *all* Religions, and in *all* Sects: But, upon *what* Ground its *Obligation* is founded, and in *what* particulars the rational *Practiſe* of it conſiſts; is not ſo clearly and univerſally underſtood. Men often talk very earneſtly of *loving* God, while at the ſame time they in their doctrine repreſent him as the moſt *hateful* Being in the Univerſe; cruel, and partial; arbitrary, and tyrannical; ſhowing favour to ſome, and making others miſerable, for no other reaſon, but becauſe he has abſolute and irreſiſtible Power. But what ſuch perſons ſpeak concerning *loving* of God, is evidently nothing but *mere Forms* of *empty words*, without *any meaning* or *ſignification* at all; becauſe there is in their Minds *no real Object*, *upon which* the Love they ſpeak of can be fixt. And where the *Root* thus is *rottenneſs*; (to uſe the Prophet *Iſaiah*'s Compa-

Compariſon,) what wonder if the *Bloſſom*, and the *Fruit*, accordingly goes up as *Duſt?* what wonder if the expreſſions of their *Love* towards *God*, end in nothing but peeviſhneſs, contentiouſneſs, and perhaps *Hatred* towards their *Brethren?* A True *Love* of *God*, muſt be founded upon a *right Senſe*, of his *Perfections* being really *amiable* in *themſelves*, and *beneficial* to *Us:* And ſuch a *Love* of *God*, will of Neceſſity ſhow forth itſelf, in our endeavouring to *practiſe* the *ſame* virtues ourſelves, and exerciſe them towards *others*, which we profeſs to *love* and admire in Him. SERM. V.

ALL *Perfection*, is *in* itſelf lovely, and amiable in the very *nature* of the Thing: The Virtues and Excellencies of *Men remote* in Hiſtory, from whom we can receive *no perſonal* Advantage, excite in us an *Eſteem* whether we will or no: And every *good* mind, when it reads or thinks upon the character of an *Angel*, loves the Idea, though it has *no* preſent communication with the Subject, to whom ſo lovely a character belongs: *Much* more, the inexhauſtible Fountain of *All* Perfections; of Perfections without number, and without

SERM. V.

out limit; the Center, in which *All* Excellencies unite, in which *All* Glory reſides, and from which *every good thing* proceeds; cannot but be the Supreme Object of *Love*, to a reaſonable and intelligent Mind. Even *ſuppoſing* we ourſelves received no Benefit therefrom, yet infinite *Power*, *Knowledge*, *and Wiſdom* in conjunction, are lovely in the very *Idea*, and amiable even in the *abſtract Imagination*. But That which makes theſe Perfections moſt *truly and ſubſtantially*, moſt *really and permanently*, the Object of our Love; is the *Application* of them to *ourſelves*, and our *own* more immediate *Concerns*; by the conſideration of their being joined alſo with thoſe *relative and moral* Excellencies, which make them at the ſame time no leſs *beneficial* to Us, than they are excellent *abſolutely in their* own Nature. Then is God the *Complete* Object of Love, when together with the Notion of infinite Power, Knowledge, and Wiſdom, we conſider him moreover as actually *governing the World*; and when, in the *exerciſe* of that Dominion over us, we conſider his *Truth and Faithfulneſs*, his *Juſtice and Impartiality*, his *Equity*, *Mercy*,

Mercy, and Goodneſs towards his Creatures; When we conſider his Goodneſs in giving us *Being*, and a *Being ſo excellent*; his Care, in making ſuch plentiful Proviſion, for our *temporal Preſervation*, and for our *eternal Happineſs*; his Mercy, in ſending his Son to redeem us from Death, and to procure Pardon even for the *greateſt* of Sinners upon their true Repentance: When we conſider *theſe* things, I ſay, *Then* is it that God truly appears the complete Object of Love: For ſo our Saviour himſelf teaches us to argue; *Luk.* vii. 47. To whom *much* is forgiven, he will love the *more*; and the Apoſtle St *John*, 1 Joh. iv. 19. We (ſays he) *love* Him, *becauſe He firſt loved* Us. SERM. V.

THIS therefore is the true Ground *and* Foundation, of our Love towards God. But *wherein* this love towards God *conſiſts*, and by what *Acts* it is moſt properly exerciſed, has ſometimes been very much miſunderſtood. Men of ſtrong Paſſions and warm Imaginations, have been too apt to place it in a mere *Enthuſiaſtick zeal of Affection*, a ſort of Scholaſtick Speculation, unintelligible and fruitleſs; ſeated in the *Fancy* only, inſtead of the

SERM. V.

Underſtanding; and having no Effect upon the *Will* or *Actions*, in the *general courſe* of a Man's Life. By which means, they make the *Love of God*, a thing entirely *diſtinct* from the *Love of Virtue and Righteouſneſs*: Whereas the Scripture always ſpeaks of them as being One and *the Same*; judging of Men conſtantly by that *never-failing* Rule, of diſcerning the Tree by its Fruits; and always repreſenting men to have juſt ſo much *Love* towards *God* in their *Hearts*, as they pay *Obedience* to his *Laws* in their *Actions*. The *only* Diſtinction found in Scripture, is, that our *Love of God*, is *ſometimes* uſed in a more *reſtrained* Senſe, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Love of our* Neighbour; and then it ſignifies, that which is uſually called our *Duty towards* God; worſhipping the True *God*, and *Him Only*, in oppoſition to all Falſe *Gods*; and placing our *whole Faith and Truſt* in him accordingly. At *other* times 'tis uſed in a more *general* ſenſe, as including our whole Duty *both* towards *God* and towards *Men*; righteouſneſs towards *Men* being inſeparable from a true Love towards *God*; and it being impoſſible that he who loveth *God*, ſhould

SERM. V.

ſhould not love his *Brother* alſo. But in *Both* theſe Senſes, whether it be underſtood according to the more *limited* or the more *general* interpretation, it *always* ſignifies a moral Virtue, not a *Paſſion or Affection*; and is therefore in Scripture always *with great* Care explained and *declared* to mean, the *Obedience of a virtuous Life*, in oppoſition to the *Enthuſiaſm of a vain imagination.* In the *old* Teſtament. *Moſes*, in his *laſt* exhortation to the *Iſraelites*, thus expreſſes it; *Deut.* x. 12. *And now Iſrael, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to* love *him?* And *what* is *loving him?* why, he tells him in the very next words, 'tis *to walk in all his ways, and to ſerve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy Soul, to* keep *the* Commandments *of the Lord, and his Statutes which I command thee this day for thy good.* In the *New Teſtament*, our *Saviour* ſtill more *diſtinctly* expreſſes the ſame thing, inculcating and repeating it in ſuch a manner, as ſhows plainly his *foreſeeing* at that time, in his own mind, how apt men would be to miſunderſtand it: *Joh.* xiv. 15, 21. *If ye* love *me*, ſaith he, keep

SERM. V. *my Commandments: He that* hath *my Commandments, and* keepeth *them*; he *it is that* loveth *me.* And in his prophecy concerning the Signs of the End of the World, he puts *Love towards God,* as the *oppoſite* to *iniquity*; thereby plainly declaring it, to mean the *ſame* as *Virtue:* Matt. xxiv. 12. *Becauſe* iniquity *ſhall abound, the* Love, ſaith he, *of Many ſhall wax cold.* And the beloved Diſciple, who, as he leaned more nearly upon his Maſter's Breaſt, ſo he ſeems in this matter to have been more particularly inſpired with his
1 Joh. ii. 5. Maſter's Sentiments; *Whoſo,* ſays he, keepeth *his word, in* Him, *verily is the Love of God perfected*; *Hereby know we, that we Are in Him: For* This *is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments,* 1 Joh. v. 3. And again, 2 *Joh.* vi. This, ſays he, *is* Love, *that we walk after his Commandments.* And, effectually to prevent ſuch Men's enthuſiaſtick Notions of Religion, as judge of their *Love towards God* by *any* empty Speculation, by *any* Warmth of Zeal in matters of Opinion, by *any* Paſſion or Affection whatſoever, wherewith the Mind or Imagination may, without any real Fruit of Virtue and Righte-

Righteouſneſs, fancy itſelf tranſported; the ſame Apoſtle frequently gives us this *one ſure* rule, in which there can be *no* Deception; that we meaſure the Truth of our Love towards *God*, by the extent and proportion of our Love towards our *Neighbour*. 1 Joh. iii. 17. *Whoſo ſeeth his* Brother *have need, and ſhutteth up his compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the Love of* God *in him?* Again, *ch.* iv. 12, 20. *No man hath ſeen* God *at any time; If we love* one another, *God dwelleth in Us, and his Love is perfected in us: If a man ſay, I love* God, *and hateth his* Brother, *he is a Liar; For he that loveth not his* Brother *whom he* hath *ſeen, how can he love* God, *whom he hath* not *ſeen?* The Argument is: God, who is *inviſible*, can *no otherwiſe* be ſhown to be the Object of our Love, than by our *delighting* to obey and imitate him, in Acts of Righteouſneſs and Charity and univerſal Good-Will, towards Mankind who are *viſible* and always *with us.* This *Commandment have we from* Him, *that he who loveth* God, *love his* Brother *alſo:* That is, that whoſoever pretends to love *God*, ſhould *prove* the *Truth* of what he profeſſes, by his behaviour towards *Men.*

SERM. V.

ver. 21.

SERM. V.

For by This *we know*, (as the ſame Apoſtle goes on, *ch.* v. 2.) *that we love the* children *of God, when we love God and keep his Commandments.* The words, from their connexion with what went before, ſeem to be tranſpoſed; and that they ſhould not be read thus, *that we love the children of God*, when *we love* God, but on the other ſide, *by* This *we know that we love* God, when *we love the children* of God, *and keep his Commandments.* Thoſe who place the Sum of their religion, in impoſing upon men blind Notions and unintelligible Opinions; and *hate* and *perſecute* All who differ from them; and, by indeavouring to *compel* Others into their own hypocriſy, fill the World with cruelty, violence and oppreſſion; Theſe perſons, I ſay, do in one *reſpect* act extreme wiſely; that they diſcourage men, as much as they can, from reading and ſtudying the Scriptures with their own eyes; leaſt they ſhould There ſee it ſet forth, in ſo *plain*, ſo *clear*, ſo *bright*, ſo *perpetual* and *unavoidable* a *Light*, how *different*, how *Contrary*, *Their* Spirit is, to the Spirit of *Chriſtianity*, which is the Spirit of *Love*. For, if they who *right-*

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SERM. V.

ly teach the *true* doctrine of Chriſt, ſhall *yet* be bid to *depart from him*, if in their own private lives they be *workers of iniquity*; much *more* ſhall the ſame Sentence be pronounced on thoſe, the manner of whoſe very *teaching* is *itſelf* a work of unrighteouſneſs, violence and oppreſſion. But to proceed: As the *Scripture* thus *expreſsly*, ſo the *reaſon and nature of the thing itſelf* no leſs *plainly*, ſhows; in oppoſition to all Superſtitious Notions; that *Love towards God*, and *Virtue* or *Righteouſneſs of Life*, are in reality only two different *Names* of One and the Same *Thing*. For, *What* is rational *Love*, but a *Deſire* to *pleaſe* the perſon beloved, and a *Complacency* or Satisfaction *in* pleaſing him? To *love* God therefore, is to have a ſincere *Deſire* of obeying his Laws, and a *Delight or Pleaſure* in the *Conſcience of That Obedience*. Wherever *This Obedience* is not found; Men may talk what they pleaſe, of *ardent Love and Devotion* towards God, of the *higheſt Zeal* and even *Fury* for his Service; it is *all* nothing but moſt *certain* hypocriſy. For whatever ſpecious pretenſes the Wit of Man may invent, our Saviour's Argu-

SERM. V.

ment will for ever ſtand good; *men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thiſtles.* The Tree *will* always be known by its Fruit. Love towards God, *will* always ſhow forth itſelf in doing his Will. *If a man* love *me*, ſaith our Saviour, *he* will *keep my words*, Joh. xiv. 23. To love *God*, is to love *Goodneſs*, *Righteouſneſs*, *Charity and Truth*: If therefore to *love* theſe Virtues, and live at the ſame time in the Practiſe of all the *contrary Vices*, be a Contradiction; for the ſame reaſon it follows, that, to pretend to *love* God, and at the ſame time practiſe the *Vices which he hates*, is a Contradiction alſo. As *He only who* doth *righteouſneſs, is righteous*; ſo *He only who* doth *what is pleaſing to God*, can be ſaid to *love* him. To *love* God, and yet delight to *diſobey* him; is a manifeſt inconſiſtency: And therefore the Pſalmiſt's Admonition, is both an *Argument* of *Reaſon*, and a *Rule* by which to *Try* men; *Pſ.* xcvii. 10. *Ye that* love *the* Lord, *ſee that ye* hate *the Thing which is* Evil. In Scripture, wicked men and evil Spirits, are elegantly ſtiled Enemies *and* Haters *of God*; not that they oppoſe or withſtand his *Power*; for

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That is impoſſible; but becauſe they *hate* his Laws, and *delight* in what he forbids: In like manner therefore on the *other* ſide, Love *towards God*, is alſo impoſſible to be expreſſed by any *Benefit* we can do to *Him*, but can be teſtified only by our *Love of Righteouſneſs* and by our *Practiſe of Virtue*. Even to an *Earthly* Superiour, to a *Parent* or a *Prince*, *Love* can no otherwiſe be ſhown from a *Child* or a *Servant*; than by chearfully obſerving the *Laws*, and promoting the true *Intereſt*, of the Government he is under. There is *This* difference only; that Earthly Superiours are *then* only to be obeyed, when they command what we ſee to be juſt and right: But God, who, being infallible, can *never* command what is wrong, is for that reaſon abſolutely to be obeyed in *all* things: Only, to prevent the Errors and the Frauds of *Men*, whether *impious* or *pious* Frauds, very *great* heed is to be taken, in matters of weight and importance, that whatever is pretended to be a Command of *God*, be really and indeed Such. SERM. V.

Laſtly:

SERM. V.

Laſtly: THAT the *Love of God* and the *Practiſe of Righteouſneſs*, are one and the ſame thing; appears from thoſe Texts, wherein all *Relation* of *Men to God*, is declared to be founded upon *Virtue* only. Thus the Title of *Sons* of God, *Rom.* viii. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God*, they *are the* Sons *of God*: and *Phil.* ii. 15. *That ye may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the* Sons *of God*. The Title of *Friendſhip* likewiſe: *Jam.* ii. 23. *It was imputed unto Abraham for righteouſneſs, and he was called the* Friend *of God*: He was *called*; that is, he was ſo ſtiled in the *old Teſtament* by God himſelf; *Iſ.* xli. 8; and 2 *Chr.* xx. 7. *Thou, Iſrael, art my Servant, the Seed of Abraham my* Friend. Our Saviour, gives the *ſame* Title to his *Apoſtles*, upon the *ſame* ground; Joh. xv. 14. *ye are my* Friends, *if ye* do *whatſoever I command you*. And ſtill more emphatically, *Mat.* xii. 50. *Whoſoever ſhall* do the Will *of my Father which is in Heaven, the ſame is my* Brother *and* Siſter *and* Mother. *Chriſt* acknowledges *no relation*, but what ariſes from *religion only*; nor regards *any* declaration of *Love* towards him, other than that of Obedience to his Commands

Commands in the Goſpel. St *Paul* elegantly purſues the ſame Similitude, 2 *Cor.* v. 16. *Henceforth know we no man after the Fleſh; yea, though we have known* Chriſt *after the Fleſh, yet now henceforth know we him no more*: His meaning is; All temporal perſonal Knowledge and Friendſhip, ſuch as was between Chriſt and his natural Relations here upon Earth, now diſappears; and no man knows Chriſt, or is known of him, any otherwiſe than in proportion as he obeys his Laws. The like is to be obſerved, concerning That Title given to the *Jews*, of being *God's peculiar people*: For *They only* were ſo in the ſpiritual and *religious* ſenſe, who in *Practiſe*, not who in *Profeſſion*, ſerved the True God. *Gal.* iii. 28; and *Col.* iii. 11. *There is neither Jew, nor Greek; there is neither male, nor female; neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Chriſt*, (that is, Obedience to Chriſt,) *is all in all.* And *ch.* v. 6; and 1 *Cor.* vii. 19. *Circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing, but the Keeping of the Commandments of God.* And the ſame is fully expreſſed in that declaration of *John the Baptiſt*, when he ſays, that

SERM. V.

SERM. V. that even out of the *Stones of the ſtreet, God could raiſe up children unto Abraham:* Children unto *Him*, in the ſpiritual and beſt ſenſe, who for his exemplary obedience had this Teſtimony given him, that he is *called* in Scripture (*Rom.* iv. 16.) *the Father of the Faithful.*

Now from this Account which has been given, of the *true* Nature of *Love towards God*; it will be eaſy for us to correct the Errors, which Men have ſometimes fallen into in Both Extremes. *Some* have been very confident of their Love *towards God*, from a mere warmth of ſuperſtitious zeal and enthuſiaſtick affection, without any great care to bring forth in their Lives the Fruits of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. And the Error of *theſe men* may be corrected, by conſidering, that God being eſſentially juſt and good, holy and true, and of all other moral Perfections; 'tis conſequently evident, that unleſs they conſider him under *Theſe Characters* which are inſeparable from his Nature, and unleſs they accordingly love (and themſelves imitate) theſe Virtues; 'tis not *God* whom they are zealous for, but a mere *abſtract Notion*

Notion, a *Phantom only* of their own Imagination. SERM. V.

ON the contrary; Others there are, who though they really *love*, and fear, and ſerve God, in the courſe of a virtuous and religious life; yet, becauſe they feel not in themſelves that *warmth* of affection, which many Enthuſiaſts pretend to; therefore they are afraid and ſuſpect, that they do not *love God* ſincerely, as they ought. Now the Errour of theſe pious perſons is to be corrected, by conſidering, that there is *no* other Mark ſo infallible of the Goodneſs of a Tree, as the *Fruit* which it brings forth. If they live in *Obedience* to the Commands of God, they need *no other* evidence of the Sincerity of their Hearts towards him: For all *other* Signs may poſſibly be erroneous; but *This*, is the *very thing ſignified* itſelf. Love of *Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs, and Truth*; is Love of *God:* For, *God* is *Goodneſs and Truth:* And He who loves theſe Virtues, which are the moral Perfections of the divine Nature, does therefore love God moſt perfectly; becauſe he loves *thoſe* Excellencies, for the

Sake

SERM. V.

Sake of which God expects that we ſhould love him above all things.

BUT further: There are *Some* perſons of This ſort, who are fearful that their Love towards God is not entire and perfect, and that they do not love God as the Chief Good, if they obey and ſerve him for the hope of *Reward*. But This alſo, is a great miſtake: For *as* Happineſs, no leſs than *Holineſs*, is *eſſential* in the divine Nature; *ſo* in all *inferiour* Beings, the proper Reward *of Virtue* is inſeparably deſirable with *Virtue itſelf*: And not the Deſire of *Heaven*, which is the Perfection of Virtue; but only the Deſire of Sinful *Pleaſure*, which is deſtructive of Virtue, is inconſiſtent with, and diminiſhes from, our *Love of God*. The Scripture expreſsly declares, that he

Heb. xi. 6. who cometh to God, not only *may*, but *muſt* believe him to be a *Rewarder* of them

ver. 10, 14. that diligently ſeek him: That *Abraham* accordingly, That Great Father of the Faithful, *looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*: That *Moſes*, had

ver. 26. *reſpect unto the recompenſe of Reward*: That the *Martyrs*

ver. 35. ſuffered

ſuffered in hope, *that they might obtain a better Reſurrection:* That our *Lord himſelf*, endured the Croſs, *for the joy that was ſet before him:* And that the *end* of All good mens *faith*, is *the Salvation of their Souls*, even *joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* The *Hope of* which *Joy*, the Apoſtle in That very Verſe, not only ſuppoſes to be *conſiſtent with*, but ſpeaks of it as being, *itſelf*, our *Love of Chriſt.* SERM. V. ch. xii. 2. 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

II. HAVING thus at large explained the *Duty* injoined in the Text, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God:* I proceed now in the 2*d* place, to conſider briefly the *Circumſtances* requiſite, to make the performance of this Duty *acceptable and complete:* Thou ſhalt love him *with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.* In St *Luke* it is, ſomewhat *more diſtinctly*; with all thy *Heart*, with all thy *Soul*, with all thy *Strength*, and with all thy *Mind.* Which words, though ſometimes indeed uſed *promiſcuouſly*, yet, when thus put together *in order*, ſeem intended to expreſs, after a more *diſtinct* manner, the requiſite *Circumſtances* of That *Obedience*, which is the proper Evidence of our Love towards God. And 10. 27.

1*ſt*, IT

SERM. V.

1*ſt*, IT muſt be *Sincere:* We muſt love or obey him with all our Heart. 'Tis not the *external action* only, but the *inward affection of the* Mind principally, that God regards: An affection of Mind, which influences all a man's actions *in ſecret*, as well as *in publick*; which determines the perſon's *true* Character, or denomination; and diſtinguiſhes *him* who really *is* a Servant of God, from *him* who only *ſeems* or *appears* to be ſo. It was the character of the *Jews* of *old*, and is *now* of too great a part of Chriſtians, *Ezek.* xxxiii. 31. *With their* Mouth *this people ſhows much Love, but their* Heart *goeth after their Covetouſneſs*; i. e. after their Sinful Pleaſures.

Mat. vi.

2*dly*, OUR Obedience muſt be *Univerſal:* We muſt love God with all our Soul, or with our whole *Soul. He* does not love God, in the Scripture-ſenſe; who obeys him in *ſome* inſtances only and not in *all. No man*, ſays our Saviour, *can ſerve two maſters:* And, *if any man love the* World, *the love of the* Father *is not in him*, 1 Joh. ii. 15. And *Jam.* iv. 4. *Whoſoever will be a Friend of the* World, *is the Enemy of* God. The meaning of

Mat. vi. 24.

 theſe

theſe paſſages, is not, that he who Truly loves *God*, muſt conſequently *wholly neglect*, and have *no regard at all* to any thing elſe; but, that nothing elſe muſt *ſo* poſſeſs our affections, as to *interfere* with our Duty, when they come in competition; and thereby render our Hearts (as the Scripture expreſſes it,) *not right* or *not whole* with the Lord. Thus *Saul* was tempted to ſpare the *beſt* of the *Amalekite's* Goods, expreſsly contrary to God's Command: And the *Jews*, under Pretenſe of the *Corban*, of giving ſomewhat to the ſervice of the *Temple*, excuſed themſelves from providing for their neceſſitous *Parents*: And *Many* who have zealouſly *taught* the doctrine of Chriſt, ſhall at the day of Judgment be bid to *depart from him*, becauſe they have allowed themſelves in the practiſe of ſome unforſaken *iniquities*. The Pſalmiſt places his confidence in *This* only, that he *had reſpect unto* All *God's commandments*, Pſ. cxix. 6. Generally ſpeaking, moſt men's Temptation lies principally in ſome *One Particular* Inſtance: And *This* is the proper *Tryal*, of the perſon's *Obedience*, or of his *Love* towards God. If he over-

SERM. V.

SERM. V. comes in *This* inſtance, then may he *have confidence towards God*; But if he fails *here*, and *continues* ſo to do, he is guilty of *all*. By forſaking the Sin that *moſt eaſily* beſets us, we muſt endeavour to improve daily and grow in grace; aiming at the character given in the goſpel to *Zacharias*, that he was *perfect*, *walking in* all *the Commandments of the Lord blameleſs*. The meaning is; not that our Obedience can in this life be *indeed ſinleſs*; but that we muſt be *ſincere* in endeavouring to avoid *all Sin*, according to the meaſure and poſſibilities of our *preſent* frailty; 'till at laſt we be preſented really *faultleſs*, *before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding Joy*.

3*dly*, OUR Obedience muſt be *conſtant* and *perſevering in* Time, as well as *Univerſal* in its *Extent*: We muſt love God with all our Strength; *perſevering* in our Duty, *without fainting*. *He that endureth to the* end, ſaith our Saviour, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved*; and *He that* overcometh *ſhall inherit all things*; and, *we are made partakers of Chriſt, if we hold the beginning of our confidence ſtedfaſt unto the* end. The Scripture-notion of Obedience is

is, walking *in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him* all the days of our life, *Luk.* i. 75. The meaning is, not ſo as never to fall into any *Sin*, but ſo as never to apoſtatize from our Duty by falling finally into *any* courſe *of Sin*. *The juſt ſhall live by faith*; *but if any man draw back*, ſays God, *my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.* For Chriſtianity is a *warfare*, wherein we muſt *not only fight*, but *ſo* fight, as to *overcome*; and a *race*, wherein we muſt *not only run*, but *ſo* run, as to *obtain*.

4*thly*, OUR Obedience to God, ought to be *willing and chearful*: We muſt love him with all our Mind. *Pſ.* v. 12. *They that love thy Name, will be* joyful *in thee*: And St *Paul*, among the fruits of the Spirit, reckons up peace, and joy *in the Holy Ghoſt*. Nevertheleſs, This ought not to be matter of ſcruple to any *weak* and ſincere mind: For Obedience to the Commands of God, *whatever* principle it proceeds from, even though it be but *Fear* only, will be accepted unto Salvation. But Virtue becomes *more perfect*, when 'tis made eaſy by Love, and by habitual Practiſe incorporated as it were into a man's very nature and temper. For ſo

SERM. V.

the Scripture represents *Angels*, as *rejoycing* and *delighting* to perform their Lord's pleasure; And our Saviour declares that 'twas his *meat and drink*, to do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven. Which Examples when we can in any *tolerable* degree imitate, then is fulfilled in us the observation of St *John*, that *perfect Love casteth out Fear*; and That of St *Paul*, *Rom.* viii. 15. that *we have not received the Spirit of bondage to Fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and 2 *Tim.* i. 7. *God hath not given us the Spirit of* fear, *but of* love, *and of a sound mind.*

1 Joh. iv. 18.

THESE are the *Circumstances* requisite to make the performance of this Duty acceptable and complete: We must love the Lord our God, with all our *Heart*, with all our *Soul*, with all our *Strength*, and with all our *Mind*. The

IIId and last thing observable in the Text, is the *Weight and Importance* of the Duty; It is the *First and Great Commandment*. The Reason is, because 'tis the *Foundation of all*; and, without *Regard to God*, there can be *no Religion*. Not that Virtue, at *any* time, or in *any* person

perſon whatſoever, can be *not praiſe-worthy*; much leſs, that, in thoſe who have *not* a right knowledge of God, even virtuous Actions themſelves are (as ſome have very *unreaſonably* affirmed) only *ſplendid Sins*; but that there is no *ſecurity*, no certain *depending* upon ſuch virtues, as ariſe merely accidentally from *natural goodneſs of Temper*, and are not built upon a firm and ſettled perſwaſion, that God does Now govern, and will finally judge the World. The Houſe, is good; but it is built (according to our Saviour's compariſon) upon the *Sand only*, and not upon a *Rock*. 'Tis *Faith* only, that *overcomes the World:* Nothing but a ſteddy Belief of a Judgment to come, and of God's being a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, can be effectual to conquer the Temptations of Sin. *This* Faith therefore, that we may all hold faſt, God of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

SERMON VI.

Of the FEAR *of* GOD.

JOB xxiii. 15.

Therefore am I troubled at his presence: When I consider, I am afraid of him.

IN This Chapter *Job* gives a noble Description of the Sense he had upon his Mind, of the invisible Omnipresence and Omniscience of God. SERM. VI.

Ver. 8. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way*

SERM. VI.

that I take. To a man of Virtue and Integrity, the conſideration of This great Truth is a ſolid Ground of real and laſting Satisfaction. *He knoweth the way that I take :-----My foot hath held his ſteps; his way have I kept, and not declined: Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lips: I have eſteemed the Words of his Mouth, more than my neceſſary Food,* ver. 11. In times of *Affliction* particularly, 'tis an inexpreſſible Support, if a man can be able to ſay with this exemplary perſon, *ver.* 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his Seat! I would order my Cauſe before him, and fill my Mouth with Arguments.------Will he plead againſt me with his great Power? No; but he would put Strength in me.------He knoweth the Way that I take: When he hath tried me, I ſhall come forth as Gold.* Nevertheleſs, though the Hope ſignified by theſe high Expreſſions, is indeed a well-grounded Hope; and what the Apoſtle St *John* calls, an *aſſuring* of *our Hearts before God*; Yet conſidering the infinite Purity of the Divine Nature, and the Frailneſs of this our mortal State, and the unprofitableneſs

1 Joh. iii. 19.

SERM. VI.

ſtableneſs even of our beſt Services, and our aptneſs to impoſe upon ourſelves, and to deceive through careleſsneſs even our Own Hearts; ſo that though a man be not conſcious to himſelf of any Great Wickedneſs, yet is he *not hereby juſtified, but he that juſtifies* him, *is the Lord*: And conſidering alſo, that, in the nature of Things, there cannot but be many Secrets in the Diſpenſations of Providence, and in God's Government of the Univerſe, unſearchable to our ſhort and limited Underſtandings; 'Tis not without great reaſon that *Job* immediately corrects himſelf in the words next following; *ver.* 13. *But he is in One Mind, and who can turn him?*——*For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many ſuch things are with him. Therefore am I troubled at his preſence; when I conſider, I am afraid of him.* The Expreſſions are of the ſame import, as thoſe in the *Ninth* chapter, *ver.* 11; *Lo, he goeth by me, and I ſee him not; he paſſeth on alſo, but I perceive him not. Behold, he taketh away; who can hinder him? Who will ſay unto him, what doſt thou?*——*Whom, though I were righteous,*

1 Cor. iv. 4.

SERM. VI. *righteous, yet would I not anſwer; but I would make Supplication to my Judge.*

THE words of my Text; *I am troubled at his Preſence; when I conſider, I am afraid of him*; have, in the place they ſtand, a *particular* Reference to *Theſe* Conſiderations. But I ſhall take them at this time in their *larger* ſenſe, as containing this more *general* and very important Propoſition; that the *Fear of God* is the Reſult of *Conſideration*; the Reſult of *Attention*, and true *Reaſon*; not of empty *Imagination*, and vain *Apprehenſions*. *When* I *Conſider, I am afraid of him.*

BY the *Fear of God*, I would be underſtood to mean, not the Superſtitious *Dread* of an *arbitrary* or *cruel* Being; but That *Awe* and *Regard*, which neceſſarily ariſes in the Mind of every man, who believes and habitually conſiders himſelf as living and acting in the ſight of an Omnipreſent Governour, of perfect Juſtice, Holineſs and Purity; who ſees every Thought, as well as every Action; who cannot be impoſed upon, by Any Hypocriſy; who, as certainly as there is any Difference between Good and Evil,

Evil, cannot but approve the one, and deteſt the other; and whoſe Government, as certainly as he has any Power at all, conſiſts in rewarding what he approves, and puniſhing what he hates. Of ſuch a Governour as This, though we are ſure he is indued with infinite Goodneſs, yet may it juſtly be ſaid, with the greateſt Reaſon, and without any tendency to Superſtition; *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.* SERM. VI.

THIS *Fear of God*, is the *Foundation* of *Religion*. For though Virtue *is* indeed amiable, *abſolutely*, in its own Nature; and, if the World could poſſibly be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt without the *Government*, and even without the *Being* of God, ſtill the nature of *Good and Evil* would be what it is, and Virtue would be *in itſelf* unalterably excellent, and Vice for ever blame-worthy; Yet the great *Support* of Virtue among *Men*, is the Senſe upon their Minds of a Supreme Governour and Judge of the Univerſe, who will finally and effectually *reward* what is in itſelf eſſentially *worthy of reward*, and *puniſh* what is *worthy of puniſhment*. To a *perfect* and *unerring* Mind, incapable of being

SERM. VI.

ing deceived, and which is exalted above all poſſible temptation; to ſuch a one, the *intrinſick Reaſon* of Things, the *eſſential Excellency* of Truth and Right, is in itſelf a ſteady and always ſufficient Motive of Action. But *Men*; who, when they *know* what is Right, and neceſſarily *approve* it, yet at the ſame time find *another Law in their Members warring againſt the Law of their Mind*, urging them with ſtrong *Paſſions*, and uneaſy *Appetites*; and theſe ſollicited moreover with perpetual Temptations from *without*, with Allurements of *Pleaſure* and *Profit*, with Baits of *Power* and *Ambition*, with *Examples* of a degenerate and corrupt World, and with *Threatnings* alſo of perpetual *Perſecutions* in different kinds, if they adhere ſtedfaſtly to the Intereſts of Truth and Virtue: To *ſuch* Beings as theſe, I ſay; to finite, changeable, and fallible Creatures; 'tis very neceſſary, that the *eternal intrinſick Reaſon of Things*, the *eſſential and unalterable Excellency of Truth and Right*, conſidered as a *Motive* of Action, ſhould be *ſupported* and *ſtrengthened* by a conſtant and lively Senſe upon their Minds, of an univerſal Supreme

Supreme Governour; who being eſſentially the Fountain of all Perfection, the *Truth and Reaſon of Things* and the *unalterable Right of every Caſe* are conſequently the eternal *Laws* of his Kingdom: Which, by his univerſal Power and Government over all, he will as certainly ſupport and maintain; finally rewarding Virtue, and puniſhing Vice; as 'tis certain there *Is* a Difference between Good and Evil, and that infinite Wiſdom cannot be *inſenſible* of That Difference. A firm and ſettled Perſwaſion of the reality and certainty of this great Truth, that we are continually under the inſpection of *ſuch* a Supreme Governour and Judge; of an omnipreſent Spirit, *in whom we live and move and have our Being*, and to whom our very Thoughts are open as our Actions; cannot but fill the mind of every *conſiderate* Perſon, with a juſt Awe and *Fear* of him: *When I conſider, I am afraid of him*: Afraid, not as of an arbitrary and tyrannical Power; but as of a juſt and powerful and wiſe Governour, whoſe Laws are reaſonable and neceſſary to be obeyed, and from whoſe juſt

SERM. VI.

diſpleaſure

SERM. VI.

diſpleaſure the Diſobedient can by No Power or Artifice be protected.

THE *Ground* of *This Fear*, the Text tells us, is *Reaſon and Conſideration: When I* Conſider, *I am afraid of him.* Atheiſtical and profane men, ſuppoſe on the *contrary*, that the *Ground* of this Fear is *Timorouſneſs of Temper*, *Superſtition*, *Cuſtomary Tradition*, or *political Fiction*. 'Tis of infinitely great Moment, to determine *which* of theſe two is the *Truth*; And therefore I ſhall conſider diſtinctly the very different *Grounds*, *Characters*, and *Effects*, of *Religion* and *Superſtition*; and how theſe Two things, which Atheiſtical and corrupt Minds would fain imagine to be the ſame, may be *diſtinguiſhed* from each other.

1. IN the *firſt* place, as to the *Ground* and *Foundation* of Religion. That there is an eſſential Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice; is what every man as clearly diſcerns by the natural and neceſſary Perception of his own Mind and Conſcience, as his Eye ſee the Difference between Light and Darkneſs. 'Tis not a man's *particular Timorouſneſs of Temper*, 'tis not *Cuſtomary Tradition*

SERM. VI.

Tradition from his *Anceſtors*, 'tis not the *imaginary Speculation* of *Philoſophers*, 'tis not the *political Fiction* of *Governours*, that makes him ſee when he is *oppreſſed*, *defrauded*, *cheated*, treated *unjuſtly* and *injuriouſly*; that theſe *Actions* are in their own nature *unrighteous*, and the *Perſon* who is guilty of them *worthy of Puniſhment*. Every man, of every degree of capacity, in every Age, and in every Nation, ſees and feels this to be the Truth of Things; And no *accidental Variety of Temper*, no *Tradition*, no *Philoſophy*, no *Form of Government*, can either *alter* or *aboliſh* theſe Notions. The *Reaſonings* and *Speculations* of *Men*, do not *make* things to be what they are; but only help men to *diſcover* with greater Clearneſs, or to a deeper degree, what their *real intrinſick* Natures are. *Laws* likewiſe, do not *make* Virtue to be Virtue, or Vice to be Vice; but only *inforce* or *diſcourage* the Practiſe of ſuch things, as the very *making of a Law* always and neceſſarily *preſuppoſes* to have been Fit or Unfit *before* the making of the Law: Becauſe otherwiſe *all Laws* about *moral* matters would be *profeſſedly* to *no Purpoſe*, and

SERM. VI.

of *no Uſe*. There *may* perhaps be in ſome *Men*, and poſſibly in ſome whole *Nations*, for want of Attention and Conſideration, a very great degree of *Ignorance*, in many *particular Inſtances*, of this natural and eſſential difference of Good and Evil; (Though, I believe, no perſon, who had at all the uſe of his Reaſon, ever was ſo *univerſally* ignorant, as not to diſlike and think *really blame-worthy* a wilful *Breach of Faith*, or an Act of *cauſeleſs Cruelty*.) But the *Ignorance*, be it in what degree it will, either of any *Man* or of any *Number of men*; makes no alteration at all, in the *Nature* and *Truth* of *Things*; nor affords any Argument, againſt the *reality* of their *eſſential Differences*. Were there in nature *no real* and *unalterable* Difference, between Moral Good and Evil; it would follow, not only that whole Nations might poſſibly be *ignorant* of This Diſtinction; which is nothing to the purpoſe; (for ſo they may be of the plaineſt Mathematical Truths, and yet thoſe Truths not be at all the leſs certain:) But it would follow, that whole Nations might as *poſſibly*, with a full perſwaſion within themſelves of the

Strength and Clearneſs of their manner of reaſoning and arguing, determine in all inſtances univerſally Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue, as *We* think we with reaſon determine the contrary: Nay, it would be as *eaſy*, and as *natural*, and as *probable* they ſhould ſo determine, as that Nations ſhould differ in the *Faſhion* or *Colour* of their *Cloaths*, or in any other Circumſtances of things by nature indifferent. Which ſince no man (I think) has ever been ſo abſurd as to affirm; it follows undeniably, that That Firſt *Ground* and *Foundation* of *Religion*, the eſſential Difference between Virtue and Vice, is laid *immutably* and *univerſally* in the *Nature* and *Reaſon* of Things: Whereas all *Superſtitions*, various always as the Motion of the Winds and Clouds, are notoriouſly founded only in *accidental Temper*, *cuſtomary Tradition*, or *political Fiction*. SERM. VI.

AGAIN: That there is an *inviſible Power* preſiding over the Univerſe, (which is *Another* part of the prime *Ground* and *Foundation* of Religion;) The Belief, I ſay, of an *inviſible Power* ruling over the Univerſe, and which will finally *ſupport*

SERM. VI.

Virtue and *puniſh* Wickedneſs; is a Belief ariſing from *Reaſon and Conſideration*; which is directly contrary to the Eſſence of *Superſtition*. The *viſible Works* of Nature, every man by his own experience every day, perceives evidently to be the Effects of an *inviſible Power*. The more *extenſive*, and the more *exact*, any man's Obſervations are; the *more* Evidences he continually finds of the *reality* and of the *Greatneſs* of this *inviſible Power*: But even to the *meaneſt Capacities*, and in the moſt *obvious Occurrences* of life, God has by no means *left himſelf without Witneſs*, *cauſing his Sun to ſhine, and ſending us Rain and fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs*. The *Marvellouſneſs* of the Works of Nature, ſhows the *Greatneſs* of this Power; and the *Regularity* and *Uniformity* of them ſhows it to be the Power of *One and the Same* Agent, acting or directing every where. The *Underſtanding* of this univerſal Governour, which is ſufficient to direct the whole Frame of *Nature*; cannot be inſenſible of that Difference of *Moral* Good and Evil, which even to *Us* appears neceſſarily and eſſentially demonſtrable.

Mat. v. 45. Acts xiv. 17.

ſtrable. To expect therefore that this Supreme Being will judge according to *Right*, that is, according to the *neceſſary nature* of Things; In other words, To *fear* that he will puniſh us if we act unreaſonably, and to *hope* for his Favour if we be Followers of Truth and Right; is the Voice of *Reaſon*, and not of *Superſtition*. SERM. VI.

Superſtitious Apprehenſions, ariſing in *particular* from *Timorouſneſs of Temper*, teach men to fear they know not *what*, or to be afraid of *God* they know not *why*; to *fear* him, not as a *juſt and righteous Judge*, but merely as veſted with *irreſiſtible Power*; to *fear* him, not ſo as by That Fear to be deterred from unrighteous Practices, but ſo as to be perpetually commuting for a vicious Life with the repetition of unprofitable Ceremonies without number. *Superſtitions* founded upon *Cuſtomary Tradition*, teach men to be afraid of things which have *no exiſtence*, or of *Beings* which have *no Power and Dominion* over us; to place *Religion* in Practiſes which have *no* Tendency to *Virtue*; to lay Streſs upon *Opinions*, which have no *Senſe* or no *Truth* in them; upon

SERM. VI.

1 Pet. iii. 15.

things, whereof no man can give a rational Account, or, in St *Peter*'s language, *give an Anſwer to* any one *that asketh a Reaſon of the Hope* or of the *Fear that is in him. Superſtitions* derived from *political Fiction*, teach men to make *Religion* conſiſt in *Parties and Factions*; in things which, in *different countries*, are contrary to each other, and, in the *ſame country*, contrary at *different Times*; in things which promote not at all the Honour of *God*, nor univerſal Meekneſs and Good-will towards *Men*; but on the contrary, ſometimes are directly *deſtructive* both of *Truth* and *Charity*.

INSTANCES of *all* theſe ſeveral kinds of Superſtitions in the *Heathen* World, were their worſhipping of *fictitious* Deities, inſtead of the Great God and Governour of the Univerſe, of whom by the Light of Nature and Reaſon they were not ignorant: And more particularly, their mixing ſometimes *barbarous* and *cruel*, ſometimes *beaſtly* and *impure* Rites, even amongſt their ſacred and religious Performances. In the *Jewiſh* Nation, the general and prevailing Superſtition always was, their relying upon outward

outward *Forms* and *Ceremonies*, (which ought *not* indeed to be left undone,) and laying the ſtreſs of Religion upon *them*, more than upon *the weightier matters of* the *Law*, Juſtice, Mercy, and Fidelity; of which, all *external* Purifications were but Shadows and Memorials. In the *Chriſtian* World, Inſtances of no leſs ſhameful Superſtitions, are, mens departing from *the Everlaſting Goſpel*, which requires us (*Rev.* xiv. 6, 7.) to *worſhip him that made Heaven and Earth*; and ſetting up the Worſhip of the *Hoſt*, and of the *Bleſſed Virgin*, and of *Angels*, and *Saints*, and *Relicks*, and *Images*: Alſo relying upon *Indulgences*, *Pilgrimages*, *Proceſſions*, *Maſſes for the Dead*, and the like; Nay, and upon the moſt ridiculouſly extravagant *Abſurdities* in *Belief*, and the moſt *inhumane Perſecutions and Barbarities* in *Practiſe*. All which things have no Foundation in *Reaſon*, nor any Appearance of being commanded of *God*. The true *Religion of Chriſt*, as taught by Himſelf and his Apoſtles, has nothing of This Sort in it; requiring nothing of us, but This moſt *reaſonable Service*, that, in expectation of a righteous Judgment to

SERM. VI.

Mat. xxiii. 23.

SERM. VI.

come, we continually *worſhip* the *God of the Univerſe*; living in *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Charity towards All men*; and making conſtant *Acknowledgments* of the Divine *Goodneſs and Compaſſion*, in receiving *Sinners* to *Repentance* through the *Atonement* and *Interceſſion* of Chriſt. Than which Doctrine, nothing can be more *firm* in its *Foundation*, or more *excellent* in its *Effects*.

2. AND This is the *Second* great or characteriſtick Mark, by which *Religion* and *Superſtition* may be *diſtinguiſhed* from each other. As they differ entirely in their *Ground and Foundation*, ſo do they likewiſe in their *Effects*. *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them*, Matt. vii. 20. *Religion*, which is founded in *Truth*, always makes men impartially *inquiſitive* after *Truth*, Lovers of *Reaſon*, *Meek*, *Gentle*, *Patient*, *Willing* to be *informed*: *Superſtition*, on the contrary, naturally makes men *blind* and *paſſionate*, deſpiſers of *Reaſon*, *careleſs* in *inquiring* after *Truth*, *Haſty*, *Cenſorious*, *Contentious*, and *Impatient of inſtruction*. *Religion* teaches men to be exactly *juſt*, *equitable*, and *charitable* towards all men: *Superſtition*, on the

the contrary, frequently puts men upon undervaluing the eternal Rules of *Morality*, and upon preferring the Intereſt of particular *Sects and Parties*, the prevalency of ſome *uncertain Opinions*, and the practiſe of ſome *needleſs Ceremonies*, before the unalterable Precepts of the *everlaſting Law* and the *everlaſting Goſpel*. Laſtly, True *Religion*, the Religion of *Nature* in general, and the Religion of *Chriſt* in particular, by ſecuring the Belief of a *future Judgment*, tends greatly to promote the Happineſs of *Nations* and *good Governments*, in obliging the *Conſciences* of men to *real Fidelity*, *Juſtice*, and the *ſincere Practiſe* of *every Virtue*, which the *very beſt human Laws* can but *imperfectly* ſecure, by compelling merely the *External* Action: But *Superſtition*, on the contrary, frequently produces *Wars*, and *Tumults*, and *Perſecutions*, and *Tyrannies* without end; there being nothing ſo *wicked*, which men of *Superſtitious Principles* will not think *pious* and *neceſſary*, and which men of *No Principles* will not upon occaſion bring themſelves to ſubmit to. SERM. VI.

SERM. VI.

I SHALL conclude This Head, with obſerving that there are *Two* Particulars, wherein *True Religion*, the Religion taught by *Chriſt himſelf*, (for the Religion profeſſed by many Nations who *call* themſelves *Chriſtian*, is palpably nothing but *Superſtition*;) the *true* Religion, I ſay, as taught by *Chriſt himſelf*, has in *Two* Particulars principally, by men who receive not the Goſpel, been objected to as encouraging *Superſtition*. One is, that it teaches men to be *obſtinate* and *wilful*, in parting with all Advantages, even with *Life* itſelf, for the ſake of Religion. The Other is, that by teaching men to *deſpiſe* the *World*, it hinders them from attending to the *Good of the Publick*. But the Anſwer to Both theſe Objections, is not difficult. Without a *Stedfaſtneſs* which cannot be moved by Temporal Inconveniencies, there is *no Virtue* to be depended upon, in *natural* Religion, any more than in *Chriſtian*: Is therefore *All Virtue*, nothing but *Superſtition*? And as to *deſpiſing* the *World*, in the Senſe of *withdrawing from* the *Buſineſs* of the World, Chriſtianity no where teaches this, but only in Times and Places of general *Perſecution*.

ſecution. In *Other* Caſes, deſpiſing the *World*, does not ſignify deſpiſing the *Buſineſs* of the World, or neglecting to attend the *Publick Good*, but deſpiſing all Temptations to the *Wickedneſs* of the World, the Temptations of *lawleſs* Pleaſure, the Temptations of *unjuſt Gains*, the Temptations of *corrupt Ambition*. Theſe only, are, in the Scripture-ſenſe, That *World* which is an Enemy to God.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

Of the WISDOM *of being Religious.*

PROV. ix. 10, 11.

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding; For by me thy days ſhall be multiplied, and the years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.

THERE is no Deſire which God has ſo deeply fixed and implanted in our Nature, as that of Preſerving and Prolonging our Life. Life and Health, are the Foundation of all other enjoyments;

SERM. VII.

enjoyments; and are therefore of greater value, than all other Poſſeſſions put together, becauſe they are neceſſary in order to the Enjoyment of thoſe Poſſeſſions; And without Theſe, all other things that are the Objects of Men's Hopes and Deſires in the World, have with regard to Us, no Being, no Subſiſtence. *For, what ſhall it profit a man, if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Life? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Life?* The principal Point of Wiſdom therefore in the Conduct of Human Life, is ſo to uſe the enjoyments of this preſent World, as that they may not themſelves ſhorten that Period, wherein 'tis allowed us to injoy them. And if any part of Knowledge deſerves a ſteddier attention, than other, and has of all others the juſteſt pretenſe to be eſteemed invaluable; 'tis unqueſtionably *That* Knowledge, by which, as the Wiſeman here expreſſes it, our *days* may *be multiplied, and the Years of our Life* may *be increaſed.*

Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die; was the reaſoning of the Epicure, mentioned by St *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 32. But it was very falſe reaſoning, to make the

SERM. VII.

the melancholy conſideration of the Shortneſs of Life an Argument for Debauchery, when that very Debauchery is evidently the Cauſe of making Man's Life ſtill ſhorter. Temperance and Sobriety, the regular Government of our Appetites and Paſſions, the promoting Peace and good Order in the World, are, even *without* regard to any Arguments of Religion, the greateſt inſtances of Human Wiſdom; becauſe they are the moſt effectual means of preſerving our Being, and Well-being in the World; of prolonging the Period, and inlarging the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. *Religion*, has added Strength to theſe Conſiderations; and, by annexing the Promiſe of God's immediate Bleſſing, to the natural Tendency and Conſequences of Things, has made the Wiſdom of chooſing Virtue, infinitely more conſpicuous; and the Folly of Vice, more apparently abſurd. *Length of Days upon Earth*, is in the *old Teſtament* frequently promiſed to the *Righteous*; And the principal intent of that Promiſe, was to be an Emblem or Signification of a *longer Life*, even of *Eternity*, more expreſsly promiſed in the *New*. The Land

SERM. VII.

of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, the true Land of Promiſe; And the *days* of the righteous being *long in the Land which the Lord their God had given them*; was a figurative præſignification of that future and more complete State of Happineſs, wherein their *days ſhould be multiplied* without number, and *the years of their life ſhould be increaſed without End.* This is a Demonſtration *indeed*, of the Wiſdom of being Religious; and of the happy Effects of having always before our Eyes the Fear of the Lord. *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding; For by me thy Days ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.*

The Fear of the Lord, and the *Knowledge of the Holy*, are two ſynonymous Expreſſions, each of which ſignifies in Scripture Phraſe, *the Practiſe of Virtue and true Religion.* For ſo it is very uſual in all good Authors, to expreſs the *Whole* by ſome *principal Part.* Thus, when 'tis ſaid, *The* Soul *that ſinneth, it ſhall die*; becauſe the Soul is the principal and moſt excellent part of Man, 'tis of the ſame import,

import, as if it had been expreſſed, *The* Man *that ſinneth, ſhall die*; and *Gen.* xlvi. 27. *All the* Souls *of the Houſe of Jacob which came into Egypt*; that is, all the *Perſons, were threeſcore and ten.* In like manner, becauſe the *Fear* or *Love* of God, the *Knowledge* or *Study* of his Will, *Faith* or *Truſt* in him, the *Remembrance* of him, or *frequent Meditating* upon his Laws, are *principal Parts* of Religion; and ſuch as are apt to have ſo great an influence upon Men, that One of theſe Virtues can hardly be ſuppoſed to be found any where ſeparate from the reſt, or without producing its true and genuine Effects in the general courſe of a religious and Holy Life; therefore *each* of theſe are frequently put *ſingly* in Scripture for the *Whole* of Religion, and to expreſs the Practice of Virtue in general. Thus, to Remember our *Creator in the days of* our *Youth*, is the Wiſeman's deſcription of an early Piety; and with *the Wicked* that ſhall *be turned into Hell*, in the Pſalmiſt's language, are joined *all the Nations that* forget *God.* In like manner *Believers*, or they that have *Faith* in God, ſignifies always in the *New Teſta-*

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

ment good Chriſtians, or ſuch as are endued with *all* virtues and graces of the Spirit; and on the contrary *every* kind of *Wickedneſs*, as well as *Infidelity*, is repreſented under the Character of *Unbelief*. The Love *of God*, is by St *John* and by our Saviour himſelf, defined to be *this*, *that we keep his Commandments*, 1 Joh. v. 3; and Joh. xiv. 15. The *Knowledge* of God, is in the writings of the ſame Apoſtle explained by the very ſame Phraſe of *keeping his Commandments*, 1 Joh. ii. 3, 4: and they *that know not God*, are by St *Paul* deſcribed as Perſons nothing differing from thoſe *that obey not the Goſpel*, 2 Th. i. 8. Laſtly, Becauſe *Fear* is of all other Paſſions the moſt deeply rooted in our Nature: and is more apt to be ſtrongly moved by Apprehenſions of the Divine diſpleaſure, than the milder Paſſions of Deſire and Hope are to be worked upon by Repreſentations of the Excellency of Virtue and of the Greatneſs of its Reward; therefore the Fear *of God* is the *moſt* frequently of all theſe figurative Expreſſions, put in Scripture for the Whole of Religion; and Perſons of Univerſal Piety and remarkable Holineſs, are by no

character more uſually deſcribed than by This, that they fear *the Lord*, or *have the* Fear *of God before their Eyes.* And becauſe *each one* of theſe Phraſes ſingly, ſignifies thus, properly enough, the *Summ of Religion*, therefore *any Two* of them may likewiſe be uſed, as ſynonymous to *each other*; As, in the Text, the *Fear* and the *Knowledge* of the Lord: *The* Fear *of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the* Knowledge *of the Holy is Underſtanding*; *For by me thy Days ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.* SERM. VII.

IN the Words we may obſerve,

1*ſt*, THAT the Practice of Religion, is *in general* Man's trueſt Wiſdom: *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of* Wiſdom; *and the Knowledge of the Holy is* Underſtanding.

2*dly*. THAT the Practice of Religion is *in particular* Wiſe in *this reſpect*, that it tends to prolong our Life and lengthen our days: *For by Me thy Deeds ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.* And

3*dly*, IT may be reaſonable to inquire, how far this Bleſſing of long Life promiſed

SERM. VII.

miſed to Obedience under the *Old Teſtament*, is proper to be deſired by Chriſtians under the Goſpel-State.

1*ſt*. THE Words contain this univerſal Propoſition; That *the Practice of Religion, is* in general *Man's trueſt* Wiſdom: The *Fear of the Lord is the beginning of* Wiſdom, *and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding*. And here, the whole Tenor of Scripture, in Conjunction with the Reaſon of Things, concurs in ſetting forth the Wiſdom of being virtuous and religious. The Books of *Solomon* eſpecially, whoſe *Human* Judgment was ſuperior to all others, even ſeparate from his Knowledge in things *Divine*, are ſo full of this Notion; that, throughout all his Writings, the Words ſeem never to be uſed in any other Signification, but that Wiſdom is always put for true Virtue and Piety, and Folly or Madneſs for the Habit of Sin. As if there were *no other* Folly in the World, but that of Wickedneſs; nor *any* true Wiſdom, but that of Religion; becauſe, in the *comparative* Senſe, no other things ſo *eminently* deſerve thoſe Names. And indeed, if Wiſdom conſiſts in ſtudying thoſe things, which are

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of the greateſt Uſe and Neceſſity for us to Know; If it be wiſe to imploy our Thoughts about things *in their own Nature* the moſt Excellent, and, in *their relation to Us*, of the utmoſt importance; If it be Wiſe to purſue the nobleſt *Ends*, and in the purſuit thereof to uſe the beſt and propereſt *Means*; If it be Wiſe to conſult our own real Happineſs; and to be more concerned for the improvement of our Minds in practical Knowledge, than for amuſing them with vain and empty Speculations; If Eternity be of more importance than Time, and a never-ceaſing Duration than a tranſitory Moment; If the Favour of God be infinitely more valuable, than the Friendſhip of the World; and it be more adviſable to pleaſe an Almighty Benefactor, than mortal Men whoſe Breath is in their Noſtrils; If Joy and Satisfaction of Mind be truly more deſirable, than endleſs Anxiety, Horrour and Deſpair; If Peace and Love, Charity and univerſal Good-Will, be more eligible than Wars, Confuſions and Deſolations; and it be wiſer to promote the Happineſs of the World, than that Men ſhould make each other miſera- SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

ble without Cauſe and without End; In a word; If Wiſdom conſiſts in knowing and diſtinguiſhing, in chooſing and in adhering to, *whatſoever things are true,*----------*honeſt,*--------*juſt,*--------*pure,*----------*lovely,*------*of good report*; things that promote the Health of our Bodies, and ſecure the Peace and Quiet of our Minds; things that eſtabliſh the Order of the World, and make Other Men Happy as well as ourſelves; things that make our preſent enjoyments, eaſy, and the remembrance of what is paſt, comfortable; and the Hopes and Expectations of what is to come, ſecure; If the chooſing *Theſe* things, be the Part of a Wiſe Man; then is Religion evidently Man's trueſt Wiſdom. For, where are theſe things to be found, but in the Practice of Virtue and true Religion?

THERE *is* a Wiſdom in the underſtanding of *Arts* and uſeful *Sciences*; which are beneficial to Mankind in this preſent State; and are in Scripture aſcribed to the inſpiration of the Almighty: But *this* is a Wiſdom confined to particular Perſons, and its uſefulneſs limited to a very ſhort Duration. There *is* a Wiſdom,

dom, which men place in being able to overreach and defraud each other, conſiſting in the *Skill and cunning Craftineſs of them that lye in wait to deceive:* But this is a Wiſdom falſely ſo called; and the End of it appears always to be the extremeſt Folly. There *is* a Wiſdom, of thoſe who by *Political Skill* manage ſecretly the great Affairs of the World, and by deep Counſels bring about unexpected Changes in the States and Kingdoms of the Earth; But *This* Wiſdom is often a great Snare, and a dangerous Temptation to Men's Virtue; giving extraordinary Opportunities indeed to the brighter Virtue of ſome very few Heroick Spirits, to ſhine forth illuſtriouſly to the Glory of Religion in ſingular Acts of Moderation and Juſtice, of Piety and great Goodneſs, for the Publick Peace and Security of Mankind; but much more uſually joined with great Wickedneſs, and ſeldom mentioned in Scripture, but with the Marks of an evil or ſuſpicious Character. There *is* a Wiſdom, in *Words*, an artful *Repreſentations* of Things; called by St *Paul the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom:* But *This* alſo in Scrip-

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

ture, is always ſpoken of with an ill Character; being that *Philoſophy and vain Deceit*, That Art of confounding Truth and Falſhood, which St *Paul* warns us againſt; and which vain Pretence to Wiſdom, God choſe the weak things of the World, the plain unaffected ſimplicity of the Doctrine of the Goſpel, on purpoſe to confound. Laſtly, There *is* a Wiſdom in ſearching out the Secrets of *Nature*, and underſtanding the Variety of the Works of God: And this indeed, ſo far as 'tis practical, and leads to the Knowledge of the Author of Nature, is an excellent Wiſdom, and worthy of great Commendation; But where 'tis *merely Speculative*, 'tis of more Difficulty than Uſe, and lies level to the Capacity of but few men's Underſtandings. The *only Wiſdom*, that *all* Men are capable of, and that *all* Men are indiſpenſably obliged to attain, is the *Practical Wiſdom* of being truly Religious; the Wiſdom of underſtanding and of ſteddily purſuing, their own true Temporal and Eternal Intereſt. The compariſon between *Speculative* and this *Practical Wiſdom*, is moſt elegantly made by *Job*, in his xxviiith chapter:

chapter: *Surely*, ſays he, *there is a Vein for the Silver, and a place for Gold where they fine it*, ver. 1. *There is a Path which no Fowl knoweth, and which the Vultur's Eye has not ſeen; The Lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce Lion paſſed by it*; ver. 7. *But where ſhall* Wiſdom *be found, and where is the Place of Underſtanding?* ver. 12. *Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the living; The depth ſaith, It is not in Me; and the Sea ſaith, It is not with Me; It cannot be gotten for Gold, neither ſhall Silver be weighed for the price thereof*, ver. 15. *Whence then cometh Wiſdom? and where is the place of Underſtanding?* ver. 20. The Reply follows; God, ſaith he, *underſtandeth the Way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof; For* He *looketh to the Ends of the Earth, and ſeeth under the whole Heaven*, ver. 23. But *unto* Man *he ſaid; Behold, the Fear of the Lord, That is* his *Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil that is* his *Underſtanding*, ver. 28. His Meaning is; The Secrets of *Nature*, *God* only knoweth perfectly; but the Knowledge of *Religion*, is the proper Wiſdom of *Man*. *The Secret*

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. *things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed, belong unto Us and to our Children for ever; that we may do all the Works of the Law,* Deut. xxix. ult. This is very affectionately expreſſed likewiſe by *Moſes* in his exhortation to the *Iſraelites,* Deut. iv. 6; *Behold, I have taught you ſtatutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me;------Keep therefore and do them; for This is* your Wiſdom *and* Underſtanding *in the ſight of the Nations.* This is that which alone can make men truly great, truly admirable and praiſe-worthy; *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom; a good Underſtanding have all they that do thereafter, the Praiſe of it, indureth for ever,* Pſ. cxi. 10. I conclude this Head, that *the Practice of Religion is* in general *Man's trueſt Wiſdom,* with the excellent Words of the wiſe Author of the Book of *Eccluſ.* ch. i. 14, 16, 26, 27. *To fear the Lord, is the beginning of Wiſdom; and it was created with the faithful in the Womb: To fear the Lord, is fulneſs of Wiſdom; and filleth men with her fruits: If thou deſire Wiſdom, keep the commandments; and the Lord ſhall give*

give her unto thee; For the Fear of the Lord, is Wiſdom and Inſtruction; and Faith and Meekneſs are his Delight. SERM. VII.

2*dly*, THE Practice of Religion, as it is man's trueſt Wiſdom *in general*, ſo *in particular* the Text aſſures us 'tis wiſe in *this Reſpect*, that it tends to prolong our Life and lengthen our Days: *The Fear of the Lord, is the beginning of Wiſdom; and the Knowledge of the Holy, is Underſtanding; For by Me thy* days *ſhall be multiplied, and the* years *of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.* There is nothing in the *Old* Teſtament more frequent, than Promiſes of Health and Life, of a longer and more comfortable Subſiſtence, to them that live in Obedience to the Commands of God. In the delivery of the Law, God himſelf annexes to the Fifth Commandment, a Promiſe that *the Days* of thoſe that obſerved it, ſhould *be long in the Land which the Lord their God had given them:* And St *Paul* takes notice of it as the *firſt*, and indeed the *only* Commandment, *with* an expreſs and particular *Promiſe* annexed. *Solomon*, in his Book of *Proverbs*, among a great variety of Arguments to perſwade men to the Practiſe of Virtue, always

SERM. VII.

always mentions *Length of Days*, as a principal Motive propoſed by God in the perſon of Wiſdom; *My Son, forget not my Law, but let thine Heart keep my Commandments*; *For length of Days, and long Life, and Peace ſhall they add unto thee*, Prov. iii. 1. *They ſhall be Life unto thy Soul*, ver. 22; and ver. 13. *Happy is the Man that findeth Wiſdom, and the Man that getteth Underſtanding*; For *Length of Days are in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour*, ver. 16. And accordingly the Pſalmiſt in his exhortation to Obedience, cited by St *Peter* in his firſt Epiſtle; *Come ye children*, ſays he, *hearken unto me, I will teach you the Fear of the Lord*; *What man is he that deſireth Life, and loveth* many *Days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, and thy Lips that they ſpeak no guile*; *Depart from evil, and do good*, Pſ. xxxiv. 11. And in the prophetical deſcription of the final happy reſtoration of *Jeruſalem*, among other bleſſings it is added, *Iſ.* lxv. 20. *There ſhall not be* in it *an old man that hath not filled his days.* On the contrary, among the various Threatnings denounced in the *Old* Teſtament againſt Sinners,

Sinners, 'tis very uſual to make this declaration, that their *Days ſhall be ſhortned.* Prov. x. 27. *The Fear of the Lord prolongeth Days; but the Years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned.* And *Job.* xv. 31. *Let not him that is deceived, truſt in Vanity; for Vanity ſhall be his recompenſe. It ſhall be accompliſhed before his Time, and his Branch ſhall not be green. He ſhall ſhake off his unripe grape as the Vine, and ſhall caſt off his Flower as the Olive.* The Application of which Obſervation, is made by the Wiſeman, *Eccleſ.* vii. 17. *Be not overmuch Wicked, neither be thou fooliſh; why ſhouldeſt thou die before thy Time?* There is *ſomething* in the *Nature of Things*, that tends to verify this Doctrine; and there is *More* in the *poſitive Appointment and Conſtitution of Providence.* In the *Nature of Things*, men deſtroy themſelves and ſhorten their Days, by many kinds of Wickedneſs: By Wars and Deſolations they depopulate whole Countries; by private Quarrels they bring each other to untimely Ends; by capital Crimes they bring themſelves to be cut off by the Hands of Juſtice; by Luxury and Intemperance they deſtroy their Bodies; SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

dies; the riotous and unclean perſon going (as *Solomon* very elegantly expreſſes it) like *as an ox goeth to the ſlaughter, or as a Fool to the correction of the ſtocks; 'Till a dart ſtrike through his Liver; as a Bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life*, Prov. vii. 22. By Envy and Malice they conſume themſelves, and pine away in the midſt of their iniquity; This alſo is elegantly expreſſed by *Solomon*, Prov. xiv. 30. *A ſound Heart is the Life of the Fleſh, but Envy the Rottenneſs of the Bones.* Laſtly, by the Terrors of their own Minds are they eaten up, and gnawed upon by the Worm of Conſcience till they are conſumed: *Pſ.* xxxix. 11. *When thou with Rebukes doſt chaſten Man for Sin, thou makeſt his Beauty to conſume away, like as it were a Moth fretting a garment.* In like manner on the other hand, according to the ſame natural Tendency of Things, by Peace and Charity are men preſerved from Deſtruction; by Temperance are their Bodies maintained in Health; by Quiet of Conſcience and Satisfaction of Mind, is a new Life added to their Spirits; *Prov.* iii. 7. *Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil;*

Evil; *It ſhall be Health to thy Navel,* SERM. *and Marrow to thy Bones.* Which Notion VII. is ſtill more fully expreſt by the Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, ch. i. ver. 11, 12, 20. *The Fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladneſs, and a crown of rejoycing*; *The Fear of the Lord maketh a merry Heart, and giveth joy and gladneſs, and a long Life*; *The Root of Wiſdom is to fear the Lord, and the Branches thereof are long Life.*

AND This, in the *Natural Order and Tendency of Things.*

IN the *poſitive Appointment and Conſtitution of Providence*, there was yet *more* Aſſurance of the Doctrine: God, under the Old Teſtament, wherein theſe Promiſes were made, *uſually* preſerving the Righteous by a ſingular Care and Protection; (ſo that *Job*'s Friends could appeal to experience, *Whoever periſhed being innocent? or when were the righteous cut off?* Job iv. 7.) and on the contrary, the ſame Providence *generally* cutting off the Wicked, by extraordinary judgments, in the preſent Life. Even of thoſe who proſpered *longeſt*, ſo that it was *hard* for the Pſalmiſt to *underſtand* the reaſon of

SERM. VII. it, and reconcile it with Providence, *Pſ.* lxxiii. 16; yet even of *Theſe* at length he obſerved upon better conſideration, *Surely thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places, thou caſtedſt them down into Deſtruction; How are they brought into Deſolation as in a moment! they are utterly conſumed with Terrors*, ver. 18, 19. But, moſt frequently, evil Doers were cut off *ſooner*, and deſtroyed ſuddenly in the midſt of their carriere. *Haſt thou marked the old way, which Wicked men have trodden? which were cut down* out of Time, *whoſe foundation was overflown with a Flood?* Job xxii. 15. *Bloody and deceitful Men, ſhall not live out half their days*, Pſ. lv. 23. Upon account of the Profaneneſs of *Eli*'s Family, God threatens him, 1 *Sam.* ii. 32. *There ſhall not be an old man in thy houſe for ever.* And the Pſalmiſt, as being ſenſible what the uſual Effect of Wickedneſs was, prays thus, *Pſ.* cii. 24. *O my God, take me not away in the midſt of my Days.* Indeed, in the whole Book of *Pſalms* the Wicked are perpetually threatned with being *cut off* before their Time: And That Threatning is paraphraſed with great Variety and Elegancy of Expreſſion, in the

the Book of *Job*; *The Flag, whilſt it is yet in its greenneſs, and not cut down, it withereth before any other Herb*; *So are the Paths of all that forget God, and the Hypocrites Hope ſhall periſh*, ch. viii. ver. 12. *Yea, the Light of the Wicked ſhall be put out*; *and the ſpark of his Fire ſhall not ſhine*, ch. xviii. ver. 5. *His roots ſhall be dried up beneath, and above ſhall his branch be cut off*, ver. 16. *They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low,* ----- *and cut off as the tops of the ears of Corn*, ch. xxiv. ver. 24. SERM. VII.

NEVERTHELESS, after all This; foraſmuch as general Threatnings are not executed always without exception; neither were the Wicked conſtantly cut off, even under the Times of the *Old* Teſtament; but ſometimes proſpered for a long time; and Sudden Cutting off was not itſelf always a judgment, but ſometimes a *taking away from the Evils to come*; and righteous Perſons themſelves, were not always preſerved from every Deſtruction; but in ſome caſes, God threatned to *cut off the Righteous with the Wicked*; and Preſervation itſelf, or Length of Days, was not always a Mercy; but only when it was promiſed

SERM. VII.

promiſed and granted as an Emblem or Præſignification of a longer, even of an eternal Life; and the Temporal promiſes of the Old Teſtament, cannot Now be applied with any Certainty under the New; where eternal Life is ſo much more clearly revealed: For theſe reaſons, in the

3*d* place, IT may be worthy our Inquiry, *how far* this Bleſſing of long Life promiſed to Obedience under the Old Teſtament, is proper to be deſired by Chriſtians under the Goſpel State. And here it is certain the Goſpel gives us ſo mean a Notion of the preſent Life, and ſo glorious a repreſentation of the Happineſs of that to come; that no Man who firmly believes the Scriptures, and has lived ſo religiouſly as to have ſecured to himſelf a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, but muſt needs wiſh rather, (whenever he ſeriouſly meditates upon theſe things,) to be *delivered from the miſeries of this ſinful World*, and *to be preſent with the Lord, which is far better.* But alas! there are few, extremely few, whoſe Lives have either been ſo innocent, or their Repentance and Amendment ſo

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complete, as not to have Reaſon to wiſh for *more years*, wherein to root out more perfectly their former ill Habits, or to improve the good Diſpoſitions they have already in ſome meaſure attained. And it were very well, if even Years and Experience could, in theſe latter degenerate Ages of the World, produce but the ſame Effect which the Belief of the Goſpel, in the primitive and pureſt Times, accompliſhed frequently as it were in a Moment. But if the generality of Chriſtians *were* ſo perfect, as not to need to deſire longer Space of Time for their *own* Amendment and Improvement; yet at leaſt for the ſake of *others*, with whom they are concerned either in private Friendſhips, or in natural Relation, or in publick Affairs, 'tis reaſonable men ſhould deſire for themſelves, and others for them, the Bleſſing of Length of Days. *For none of us liveth to Himſelf, and no man dieth to Himſelf*, Rom. xiv. 7; and St *Paul*, though for his own part he deſired rather to *be preſent with the Lord*; yet, becauſe for him *to live* was *Chriſt*, that is, was needful for the propagation of the Goſpel, and more beneficial to the

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

Perſons he had Converted; therefore he deſired rather to continue with them; and This he calls the *Fruit of his Labour*, Phil. i. 22. Further; ſince God has placed Us in this World, for Ends and Purpoſes of his all-wiſe Providence; and we know not beforehand what Duties he intends to call us to; and he has implanted in us a natural and neceſſary Deſire of Life, in order to accompliſh his Wiſe Deſigns in the Government of the World; 'tis therefore natural and reaſonable for us to look upon Length of Days as a Bleſſing; and that *the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteouſneſs.* But when any perſon through diſcontent deſires, not to continue in the World, nor to fulfil that Duty which God has appointed him here; 'tis like deſiring that he had never come into it; which is murmuring and finding fault with God's Creation, and repining at God for making us ſuch Creatures as he has been pleaſed to make us. However, the very longeſt Life here, is but a Moment in Compariſon of Eternity; And the greateſt Length of Days, is then only really a Bleſſing, (as I before obſerved,) when

SERM. VII.

when 'tis a Type or Emblem of a happy Eternity, of God's *giving men indeed a long Life, even for ever and ever*, Pſ. xxi. 4. We ought therefore to make it the main Care of our Lives, to ſecure our Eternal Happineſs hereafter; and then Length of Days here, will be a Bleſſing not only upon their own Account, but much more ſo upon account of their affording us Opportunity, of preparing ourſelves by ſtill greater Care and Watchfulneſs, and continual improvement of ourſelves in the Practice of all Virtues, for a more perfect and complete Degree of Happineſs in the Life to come. If This be not done, Length of Days, will, like all other Bleſſings, be turned into a Curſe; and become only a ſtronger Evidence againſt us, of our incorrigible Impenitency. If we be not *ſo taught to number our Days, as to apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom*; If, as our Years paſs on, we think not more and more intenſely on the Preparations for Eternity; but defer our Repentance from *day* to *day*, and put off our deſigns of being religious from one *year* to another; it will nothing profit us, (nay, on the contrary, it will be a

SERM. VII.

great Aggravation of our Miſery,) that *our Days have been multiplied, and that the Years of our Life have been increaſed.* For, when *all theſe things are paſſed away as a Shadow, and as a Poſt that haſteth by*; (which is the caſe even of the longeſt Life here upon Earth;) then ſudden and ſo much heavier deſtruction will come upon us unawares, even as Pain upon a Woman in Travail, and we ſhall not eſcape. Then the expectations of the delaying Sinner ſhall appear *thin as the Spider's web*; and his *Hopes as the light Chaff, which the wind ſcattereth away from the Face of the Earth.* Then they who ſpend the Day in Riot and Debauchery, and ſay *To morrow ſhall be as this Day and much more abundant*, ſhall have their Soul required of them in a moment; and *the Servant that ſays in his Heart, My Lord delayeth his Coming; and ſhall begin to beat the men-ſervants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with the Unbelievers*; and

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how *much* ſoever the Maſters delay, *i. e.* how *long* ſoever that wicked Servant's *Life* be, yet his deſtruction, when it comes, ſurprizes him unprovided as in a moment. But He, on the other hand, who in a ſhort Life makes ſpeedy proviſion for Eternity; though he be prevented with early death, yet, *being made perfect in a ſhort Time, he fulfilleth a long time*; as the Son of *Sirach* excellently expreſſes it; *For honourable Age is not that which ſtandeth in length of Time, nor that is meaſured by numbers of Years*; *But* Wiſdom *is the gray hair unto men, and an unſpotted life is old Age.*

SERMON VIII.

Of imitating the HOLINESS *of GOD.*

1 PET. i. 15, 16.

But as he which hath called you, is Holy; ſo be ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation; Becauſe it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

NOTWITHSTANDING the natural Proneneſs of Mankind to Superſtition; and the ſtrong Bent, which is in all corrupt Minds, to endeavour to make amends, by formal and external

SERM. VIII.

Services, for the want of true Virtue and Holineſs of Life; yet even in the *Heathen* World itſelf, under the bare Light of *Nature* alone, the beſt and wiſeſt men were ſenſible of this great Truth, that the moſt acceptable Service which could be paid to God, was to indeavour to become *like* him by a righteous Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind. The *Revelation* which God has been pleaſed to make to us of himſelf in Scripture, does every where confirm this Notion; and almoſt the whole Deſign, both of the antient Prophets under the Law, and of all our Saviour's Diſcourſes in the Goſpel, is to eſtabliſh the ſame Doctrine: *As he which hath called you, is Holy; ſo be Ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation.* In the following Diſcourſe upon which words, I ſhall 1*ſt* briefly ſet forth the *Obligations* we are under to *imitate* the God whom we worſhip. 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider the true *Extent*, and proper *Limitations* of This Duty. And 3*dly*, I ſhall draw ſome uſeful *Obſervations* from the whole.

I*ſt*. I SHALL briefly ſet forth the *Obligations* we are under, to *imitate* the God whom we worſhip. The *Difference* of

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moral Good and Evil, is, in the nature of things, eternally, eſſentially, and unchangeably neceſſary. Juſt as *Light* and *Darkneſs* are of neceſſity always contrary to each other, and can by no Power be made to be the ſame. With regard to this neceſſary and unalterable difference of Good and Evil; the *Will of God*, who can never be impoſed upon by any Errour, is conſtantly and invariably determined to do always what in the whole is *beſt and fitteſt* to be done, according to the everlaſting Rules of Juſtice, Equity, Goodneſs and Truth. This, is the Ground and Foundation of all God's *own Actions* in the Government of the Univerſe. Now the ſame intrinſick Excellency of *Right* and *Good*, which always determines the Will of *God Himſelf*, *ought* alſo in Proportion to govern the Actions of all *other* rational Beings likewiſe; according to the degree of their *Knowledge* of what is right, and of their *Power* to perform it. That is to ſay; All *rational and intelligent* Beings are, by the Law of their Nature, obliged to indeavour to become in their ſeveral degrees and proportions *like* unto *Him*, who alone

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII.

lone is *Perfect* Reaſon and Underſtanding. This is an *original* Obligation, founded in *Nature itſelf*, *requiring* us to *imitate* what it *neceſſitates* us to *admire*. And this Obligation is confirmed, by the ſame Light of Reaſon teaching us further, that *Imitation of God*, as 'tis moſt *fit* in *itſelf*, ſo it cannot but be likewiſe moſt acceptable unto *Him*, and agreeable to his *Will*. For, the *ſame abſolute Perfection* of the Divine Nature, which makes us certain that God muſt *Himſelf* be of Neceſſity infinitely Holy, Juſt and Good; makes it equally certain, that he cannot poſſibly approve Iniquity in *Others*: And the ſame *Beauty*, the ſame *Excellency*, the ſame *Weight and Importance* of the Rules of everlaſting Righteouſneſs, with regard to which God is always pleaſed to make thoſe Rules the Meaſure of all his *Own* Actions, neceſſarily prove, that it muſt likewiſe be his *Will*, that all rational Creatures ſhould proportionably make them the Meaſure of *Theirs*. Even among *Men*, there is no *Earthly* Father, but in thoſe things which he eſteems his *own* Excellencies, *deſires* and *expects* to be imitated by his *children*. How much

more is it neceſſary that *God*, who has the tendereſt Concern for all his Creatures, and who is infinitely far from being ſubject to ſuch Paſſions and Variableneſs as frail *Men* are, ſhould deſire to be imitated by his Creatures in thoſe Perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable Happineſs! SERM. VIII.

PARTICULARLY, If God is *himſelf* eſſentially of infinite Holineſs and Purity; it plainly follows, that 'tis impoſſible but he muſt likewiſe be of *purer Eyes than to behold* with Approbation any manner of *Impurity* or *Immorality* in his *Creatures*. And conſequently it muſt needs be his *Will*, that they ſhould All (according to the Meaſure of their frail and finite nature) be *Holy as He is Holy*. Hab. i. 13.

IF God is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Juſtice, Righteouſneſs and Truth; it muſt needs be his *Will*, that all *rational Creatures*, whom he has created after his own Image, whom he has indued with excellent Powers and Faculties to enable them to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil; ſhould imitate him in the Exerciſe of thoſe divine Perfections, by conforming all

SERM. VIII. all their Actions to the eternal and unalterable Law of Righteouſneſs.

IF God is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Goodneſs; *making his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good, and ſending Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt*; having *never left himſelf wholly without Witneſs, but always doing Good, giving men Rain from Heaven and Fruitful Seaſons, and filling their Hearts* with Food and Gladneſs: it cannot but be his *Will*, that all *reaſonable creatures* ſhould, by mutual Love and Benevolence, permit and aſſiſt each other to injoy in particular the ſeveral Effects and Bleſſings of the divine univerſal Goodneſs.

IF God is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Mercy and *Compaſſion*; as 'tis plain he bears long with men before he puniſhes them for their Wickedneſs, and often freely forgives them his *ten thouſand Talents*; it muſt needs be his *Will*, that they ſhould forgive one another their *hundred pence*; being *merciful* one to another, *as he is merciful* to them All; and *having Compaſſion* each *on his Fellow-ſervants*, as God *has pity on Them.*

Again

SERM. VIII.

Again: IF *Love* towards God, be an obvious and principal Duty of Natural Religion, in thoſe who believe God to be the Supreme Good; it follows of neceſſity, that *Imitation* of him alſo, muſt equally be a Duty of indiſpenſable Obligation. For God, being eſſential Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs and Truth, can no otherwiſe have *Love* expreſt towards him from his Creatures, than by their loving and imitating thoſe Virtues in *their* Practiſe, which in *His* Nature are eſſential Perfections. Love of God, in any *other* ſenſe than This, is nothing elſe; but unintelligible Enthuſiaſm. Laſtly: If *Happineſs* is Man's chief End; and *perfect Happineſs* is, in the divine nature, in *eſſential* conjunction with perfect *Holineſs and Goodneſs*; it follows neceſſarily, that *ſo far only* can any creature poſſibly become *like* to God in the injoyment of *Happineſs*, as he is firſt made *like* to him in the participation of *Goodneſs*.

THESE are the *Obligations* we are under, to *imitate* the God whom we worſhip; drawn from the conſideration of the Nature *of things*, and of the *Will of God as made known to us by the Light of* Reaſon

SERM. VIII.

ſon *only*. In the *Revelation* which God has been pleaſed to make to us of himſelf in *Scripture*, the neceſſity of the ſame Duty, is more expreſsly and more clearly inforced. At the delivery of the *Law to Moſes*, the *particulars* of Duty, by which the Worſhippers of the True God were to be diſtinguiſhed from all other Nations, are introduced with this *general* Preface to the *whole*, Levit. xix. 1. *The Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, Speak unto all the Congregation of the children of Iſrael, and ſay unto them, Ye ſhall be Holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy.* And *ch.* xi. 44. *I am the Lord your God; ye ſhall therefore ſanctify yourſelves; and ye ſhall be Holy, for I am Holy.* By the *citation* of which words, ſpoken thus from the Mouth of *God himſelf* to *Moſes*; *the Apoſtle* confirms his *own* Argument in the words of the Text; *As He which hath called you, is Holy; ſo be Ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation:* Becauſe *it is written, Be ye Holy, for I am Holy.* Man, was originally created in the *Image* of God, *Gen.* i. 27; that is, he was made in his *natural* capacity a rational and intelligent creature, capable of diſtinguiſhing

ſtinguiſhing between Good and Evil, and of being Lord over the inferiour Creation. By a right uſe of theſe Powers and Faculties, in imitation of God; he is declared likewiſe in the *moral* ſenſe, to be *after God, created in righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*, Eph. iv. 24. *After God*, that is, after the *pattern and ſimilitude* of God, *after the* Image *of Him that created him*, Col. iii. 10. By Debauchery and Corruption of manners, by the Practiſe of Any wickedneſs whatſoever, men are *alienated*, ſaith St *Paul*, *from the* Life *of God*, Eph. iv. 18: And when again by true Repentance and real Amendment of Life, they return to their Duty, and improve in the Practice of Virtue; the Apoſtle repreſents them as being reſtored and *made partakers of the* Divine Nature, 2 *Pet.* i. 4. The manner of ſpeaking is figurative, and very elegantly expreſſive of that *moral* likeneſs to God, which is elſewhere ſtiled literally, being *partakers of his* Holineſs, *Heb.* xii. 10; and, in the Text, being *Holy* as *He is Holy*. Without which *Holineſs*, the Scripture plainly declares, *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*. A *Likeneſs* to God *here*, by the habitual Diſpoſition,

SERM. VIII.

Heb. xii. 14.

SERM. VIII.

poſition of a virtuous mind; is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the enjoyment of *Glory* and *Happineſs hereafter*. And the Perfection even of *That* Glory and Happineſs itſelf, principally conſiſts, in our becoming ſtill *more and more* like him, by the total aboliſhing of all Sin: *We ſhall be* like *him*, *for we ſhall ſee him as he is*, 1 Joh. iii. 2. What the *full* meaning of This is, the Apoſtle tells us, *does not yet* clearly *appear*. But, though *God* is *himſelf* inviſible; yet both by the *Light of Nature*, we have a *competent* Knowledge of his *moral* Attributes; and in the Life of *Chriſt*, who is the *viſible* Image of the inviſible God, we have a complete Example, and Pattern of moral *Perfection*, ſet before us to imitate. *Learn of Me*, ſaith our Saviour, *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And again in another place, *I have given you an Example*, ſaith he, *that ye ſhould do as I have done to you*. The Apoſtles accordingly, in their exhortations to the practiſe of Virtue, do frequently remind us of this Divine Pattern: 1 *Pet.* ii. 21. Chriſt has *left us an* Example, *that ye ſhould follow his Steps*; *who did no Sin, neither*

Joh. xiii. 15.

neither was guile found in his mouth: And 1 *Joh.* ii. 6. *He that ſaith, he abideth in Him, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as he walked.* This is the higheſt Excellency and Perfection of a Chriſtian; to be *conformed to the Image of the Son* of God, by a Life of Virtue and Righteouſneſs *here:* Which whoſoever is, ſhall *hereafter* alſo be *changed into the ſame Image, from glory to glory*; when our Lord ſhall *preſent* his Servants *faultleſs before the preſence of his* Father's *glory, with exceeding Joy*; and they *ſhall ſee his Face, and his Name ſhall be in their foreheads*; and they *ſhall ſerve him day and night in his Temple*, and enjoy his uninterrupted Favour for ever and ever.

SERM. VIII.

Rom. viii. 29.

2 Cor. iii. 18.

THESE are the *Obligations* we are under, to imitate God: Which was the *firſt* Head I propoſed to ſpeak to.

II*dly*, I AM in the next place to conſider the true *Extent*, and proper *Limitations* of this Duty. And here 'tis very evident,

I*ſt*, THAT All imitation of God, muſt be underſtood to be an imitation of his *moral* Attributes only, and not of his *natural* ones. In the exerciſe of his Su-

SERM. VIII.

preme *Power*, we cannot imitate him: In the Extent of his unerring *Knowledge* we cannot attain to any Similitude with him: We cannot at all *Thunder with a Voice like Him*, Job xl. 9; nor are we able to ſearch out and comprehend, the leaſt part of the depth of his unfathomable *Wiſdom*. But his *Holineſs and Goodneſs*, his *Juſtice*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Truth*; his *Mercy* and *Compaſſion*; theſe things we *can* underſtand; in theſe things we *can* imitate him; nay, we cannot approve ourſelves to him as obedient Children, if we do not imitate him therein.

THE Holineſs of God; that is, *in* general, That diſpoſition of the Divine Nature, by which he is infinitely removed from all *moral Evil whatſoever*, is in an emphatical manner propoſed to our imitation in the words of the Text; *As he which has called you, is Holy, ſo be* Ye *Holy in all manner of Converſation*. The word, *Holineſs*, is perpetually in the mouths of Chriſtians; but what it properly *means*, This they have often but a very imperfect and confuſed Notion of. It ſignifies originally, in the Jewiſh language, *Separation from Common Uſe*: And in

SERM. VIII.

in *That* Senſe, all the Veſſels and Furniture of the Temple, are, in the Old Teſtament, ſtiled, *Holy*. In the ſame Senſe, 'tis uſed of *Perſons* alſo, imployed in the Service of God; who are intitled to this *external* and *nominal Holineſs*, whether they really anſwer their character or no. But the word is uſed in a *better* Senſe, when 'tis transferred from this *literal* to a *moral* ſignification; expreſſing a man's being *ſeparated*, by true religion, from the *common Practices* of a vicious and corrupt World; And, when applied to *God*, it ſignifies his *infinite* Diſtance, from every *kind* and *degree* of *moral Evil* whatſoever.

In the Text therefore, is propoſed to our imitation the Example of the Divine *Holineſs*, or his *Hatred to Sin and Wickedneſs* in general; *Be ye Holy, for I am Holy*. In *other* paſſages of Scripture, particular moral Attributes are laid before us as Patterns to walk by. The words immediately following the Text, ſet forth the Juſtice of God; ver. 17. *Calling on the Father, who, without reſpect of Perſons, judgeth according to every man's work.* In the *fifth* chapter of St *Matthew*, our

SERM. VIII.

Saviour directs us to imitate the Goodneſs of God, as the moſt effectual means to obtain a ſhare in his Favour, and a part in his moſt perfect Happineſs: *Love your Enemies*, ſaith he, (that is, *not*, make them equal with your Friends, *but*, deſire and promote their amendment, and then be ready to forgive them;) *do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven*, (that is, that ye may be *like* unto *Him*,) who *maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt.* And, to mention no more Inſtances, the *Mercy* of God is by our Saviour in a very affectionate manner propoſed as an Example to excite us to Charity; *Luk.* vi. 35. *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your Reward ſhall be great, and ye ſhall be the children of the Higheſt; for He is kind unto the Unthankful and to the Evil*; *Be* ye *therefore merciful, as your Father alſo is merciful.* Which laſt words are remarkably varied by St *Matthew*, in his narration of the *ſame* Diſcourſe of our Lord. For what in St *Luke* we read thus

thus, *Be ye therefore* merciful, *as your Father alſo is merciful*; is by St *Matthew* ſet down in the following manner, *Be ye therefore* perfect, *even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*. As if *Perfection*, and *Mercy or Charity*, were one and the ſame thing; and as if he that was truly indued with this virtue of *Charity*, might *conſequently* be ſuppoſed to be perfect in all *other* virtues likewiſe. This is the *firſt* neceſſary limitation, of this Duty of imitating God; It muſt always be underſtood, to be an imitation of his *moral* Perfections only. SERM. VIII. Mat. v. 48.

2*dly*, EVEN in theſe *moral* Excellencies, 'tis evident further, that it muſt neceſſarily mean, an imitation of *likeneſs* only, and not of *Equality*. One would think, there could be no great *need* of this Obſervation. Yet ſome Enthuſiaſts there have been, who have vainly boaſted themſelves to be altogether without Sin; and being puffed up with ſpiritual pride, and thinking themſelves *above* the Duties of what they call *common Morality*, have by a Neglect of true Virtue, *fallen into the ſnare* and *condemnation of the Devil*. Of This kind there ſeem to

SERM. VIII.

have been Some in St *John*'s time, againſt whom he directs his Diſcourſe, in his Firſt Epiſtle, ch. i. 8. *If we ſay that we have* no Sin, *we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us.* But in our *preſent* Age, men are apt to run much rather into the *contrary* extreme; not *pretending* to a perfection *above* what is humane, but *neglecting* to endeavour after what *is* their *Duty* to obtain. They know God to be a Being of infinite Holineſs; that he *charges even his* Angels *with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight:* And therefore they think *frail men* may be excuſed from attempting to imitate him at all. But This, is a very wicked and profane Suggeſtion. For though the Goodneſs indeed of ſuch imperfect creatures as *we* are, can be but in a very mean and low degree; yet *in* that proportion and degree, we are indiſpenſably bound to follow after it. And as a Finite *can* reſemble infinite, ſo *we are* to reſemble God, by partaking of the ſame moral excellencies in *kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferiour in *degree*. The Light of a *Star*, though it bears no proportion at all to the glorious Beauty of the

the *Sun*, yet *Light* it is nevertheleſs, and directly contrary to *Darkneſs*: So the Virtues of *Angels and of Men*, though they bear *no proportion* to the adorable Perfections of *God*, yet, in their proper *meaſure and degree*, they reſemble them, as being of the ſame *nature and kind*; oppoſite and contrary to *wickedneſs*, juſt as every degree of *Light* is contrary to *Darkneſs*. The Apoſtle aptly expreſſes This, by the ſimilitude of a *Child* learning to imitate the Virtues of a *wiſe* man and an *affectionate* Parent; *Eph.* v. i. *Be ye therefore* Followers *of God*, ſaith he, *as Dear* Children. SERM. VIII.

3*dly*, BUT though our Imitation of the moral Perfections of God, is always to be underſtood with theſe great Limitations; as ſignifying an imitation of *Likeneſs* only, and not of *Equality*; ſuitable to the weak nature of ſuch frail, imperfect, and fallible Creatures: Yet ought we *alſo* to conſider, that even in the *Degrees* of Goodneſs it is our Duty *continually to* improve, if we will at all anſwer the Precept in the Text, *Be ye Holy, for I am Holy.* A perfect and moſt complete Example is ſet before us to

SERM. VIII.

imitate, that aiming always at That which is moſt excellent, we may grow continually and make a perpetual Progreſs in the ways of Virtue; And though we can never come up to our Pattern itſelf, yet, by ſuch imitation as our frail and mortal nature is capable of, we may attain to what St *Peter* calls being *made Partakers of the Divine Nature.* Which participation of true Holineſs *after the Image of him that created us,* is truly and in a proper Senſe the *comparative* Perfection of our *Humane* nature, as *abſolute* Perfection is the Perfection of the *Divine.* Which clearly explains the meaning and extent of St *Paul*'s exhortation, 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. that we ſhould perfect *Holineſs in the Fear of God*; and That Advice of our Saviour himſelf, St *Matt.* v. 48. *Be ye* perfect, *even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

III. IT remains now in the *laſt* place, that I draw ſome uſeful *Obſervations* from the Whole of what has been ſaid; and ſo conclude. And

1*ſt*, IF

SERM. VIII.

1*ſt*, If true Religion conſiſts in the imitation of God; and all imitation of God, is of neceſſity confined to his *moral* Perfections only; then it hence evidently follows, that *moral Virtue* is the chief End of Religion; and that, to place the main ſtreſs of religion in any thing elſe beſides true Virtue, is Enthuſiaſm or Superſtition. When our Saviour gave his Apoſtles Power over unclean Spirits, he thought it neceſſary to add at the ſame time the following Caution, *Luke* x. 20. *Notwithſtanding in This rejoice not, that the Spirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your Names are written in Heaven:* your *Names are written in Heaven*, that is, your Repentance and Obedience is acceptable to God: For ſo, in Scripture-phraſe, they who *keep the Commandments of God*, are ſaid to be *written in the Book of Life*; and thoſe who *Sin* againſt him, he threatens that he will *blot* out of his *Book*, Exod. xxxii. 33. Again: In his deſcription of the day of Judgment, *Many*, ſays our Saviour, *will ſay to me in That day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out devils, and in thy Name*

SERM. VIII.

Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you, Depart from Me ye that work iniquity; that is, all ye who have lived vitiouſly and immorally. St *Paul* in like manner, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1. *Though I ſpeak*, ſays he, *with the Tongues of Men and Angels*; *and though I have the gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge*; *and though I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity,——it profiteth me nothing.* The greateſt part of the *Rulers* of this World, are ſtrangely guilty of *This* Errour; when they affect rather to be like God in *Power*, which is *not* an imitable Attribute, than in *Goodneſs*, wherein alone 'tis their Glory to be like him.

2*dly*. IF True Religion conſiſts in the imitation of God; and that which is imitable in God, be his *moral* Perfections; hence it follows neceſſarily, that *moral* Excellencies, *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, *Truth*, and the like, are of the *ſame kind* in *God* as in *Men*. For otherwiſe, if (as ſome have imagined in order to maintain unintelligible doctrines,) *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, *and Truth* in *God*, did not anſwer

our

our common and natural Notions of thoſe Virtues; but were of a kind quite different, and inconceivable to us; how then could Men be obliged to *imitate* they knew not what? or how could it become poſſible in *any* ſenſe to be *holy as he is Holy*, if it could not be underſtood by us *What* Holineſs is? The Truth therefore plainly is; As Light is Light, *whereſoever* and in what *degree* ſoever it appears; and has no communion or ſimilitude with Darkneſs: ſo Goodneſs, in *whomſoever* and in what *degree* ſoever it be found, ſtill always carries along with it the ſame Idea of Goodneſs; and has no communion or Fellowſhip with Wickedneſs. SERM. VIII.

3*dly* and *Laſtly*; FROM hence it appears, of how great importance it is to *Men*, to frame to themſelves right and worthy Notions of *God*. For ſuch as are the Conceptions Men have, of the *Object of their Worſhip*; ſuch alſo will proportionably, be *their* own *Behaviour and Practiſe*. The *Gentiles*, who worſhipped *vile and impure Deities*, were *themſelves* accordingly *given up to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*. The *Jews*, when they fell from the Worſhip of the True God;

SERM. VIII.

God, to ſerve the Idols and Images of really or fictitiouſly *cruel Dæmons*; were *themſelves* accordingly deveſted of humanity, and ſacrificed even their own Children to *Moloch*. And among *Chriſtians* likewiſe, it is too ſad and true an obſervation; that in proportion as they have departed from the Simplicity of the Goſpel, and feigned to themſelves either *ridiculous* or *wicked* notions of the infinitely wiſe and good God; ſo has their *religion* accordingly been changed either into a *ridiculous*, or into a *barbarous* and *cruel* Superſtition. The only poſſible remedy for which Evil, is to adhere ſtedfaſtly and immoveably to the natural and unchangeable notions of *righteouſneſs and holineſs* in *God*, and the indiſpenſable neceſſity of true *righteouſneſs and holineſs* among *Men*.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Of the LOVE *of GOD towards Sinners.*

St JOHN iii. 16.

For God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.

THESE Words are *part* of that Excellent Diſcourſe, wherein our Saviour inſtructed *Nicodemus*, giving him a ſhort Account of the Doctrine of the Goſpel; And the Words themſelves,

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

ſelves, are a brief Summary of that whole Diſcourſe. *Nicodemus* was a Man of Learning and Authority among the *Jews*, and, as it ſeems, of a better and more pious Diſpoſition, than the generality of thoſe of his own Rank. Moved therefore by the Greatneſs of our Saviour's Miracles, and probably alſo having ſtudied the Prophecies, which foretold the coming of the Meſſias about That Seaſon; he thought himſelf bound to inquire what That Doctrine was, which our Saviour began ſo publickly and with ſo great Authority to teach; And accordingly he goes to him by Night, to converſe privately about it. Our Saviour, addreſſing himſelf to him as to a Man of Underſtanding, begins at the Foundation of the Whole; and repreſents to him the Neceſſity of entring upon a religious Courſe of Life, according to the perfecter and more ſpiritual Principles of the Chriſtian inſtitution: *ver.* 3. *Except*, ſays he, *a man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God.* Which Expreſſion, *Nicodemus* at firſt not underſtanding; our Saviour further explains it to him, *ver.* 5. *Except*, ſays he, *a Man be born of Water and of the*

the Spirit; except he be baptized into the Profeſſion of the true Religion, and, ſuitably to this external Obligation, be inwardly renewed and purified from all wicked Diſpoſitions in the Spirit of his Mind; *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* For, *whatſoever is born of the Fleſh*, can be but *Fleſh*; *That which is born of the Spirit*, That only *is Spirit.* By *natural* Birth, a Man can have no other Title, than only to the injoyments of this *Natural and Mortal Life:* To *Immortality* and a ſhare in the *Kingdom of God*, he cannot be intitled, but by a New and *Spiritual* Birth, by being delivered from the Dominion of Fleſhly Luſts, and living under the more perfect Law of Reaſon and Religion. To make This ſtill more intelligible, and to take off the Difficulty of apprehending the meaning of that Phraſe of being *Born again*, our Saviour proceeds to illuſtrate it an by eaſy ſimilitude, *ver.* 7; that, as in the Courſe of *Nature* ſome of the greateſt and moſt ſenſible Effects are produced by ſecret and imperceptible Cauſes, ſo it ought not to be wondred at if ſome of the greateſt *Moral* Effects and moſt important Changes

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. ges in the Mind of Man be wrought likewiſe by degrees inviſible, and by means not diſcernable to Senſe: *Marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again: The* Wind *bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the Sound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*; ſo *is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

HAVING thus prepared the Way, by explaining the Foundation; our Saviour from hence makes a Tranſition, *ver.* 12. to the higher and more ſublime Doctrines of the Goſpel; *If I have told you*, ſays he, *earthly things, and ye believe not; how ſhall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* If ye believe me not even in theſe plain and more obvious matters, which I have ſuited to your Capacities, and delivered in eaſy Compariſons, drawn from the moſt natural and common things here upon Earth; how much leſs will ye believe me, when I tell you more ſublime and heavenly myſteries? when I declare to you the Dignity of my Perſon and Office, the ſpiritual Nature of my Kingdom, and the Sufferings I muſt firſt undergo for the Redemption of Mankind?

And yet theſe things are true and certain as the others; and the Works which I do, are ſufficient Arguments, why ye ſhould believe me even in Theſe things alſo. Now Theſe ſublimer Doctrines he begins to enumerate, *ver*, 13. *No man*, ſays he, *hath aſcended up to heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven*; That is; Chriſt, the *Son of Man*, the promiſed Meſſias, *That Son of Man* deſcribed in the Prophet *Daniel* as *coming in the clouds of Heaven* to receive an everlaſting Dominion; *This* Son of Man came forth from God, ſo as no other Prophet, no not *Moſes* himſelf, ever did; For he was with God, before he came amongſt Men; and when he firſt appeared in this World, he had before had a Being in Heaven in the Boſom of his Father, in which Dignity he ſtill continues. And 'tis the Prerogative of *him* only, who came thus from God as no other ever did, throughly to underſtand and to reveal to Men, the yet ſecret Counſels of God concerning the eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom, and the Method of Men's Salvation. *No man hath aſcended up to heaven, but he that came down from Hea-*

SERM. IX.

ven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. What This Method of Men's Salvation was, he proceeds more diſtinctly to declare, *ver.* 14 and 15, *As Moſes lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderneſs, even ſo muſt the Son of Man be lifted up; That whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have eternal Life.* That is: That the Meſſiah, by his Sufferings and Death ſhould accompliſh the Redemption and Salvation of Men, opening an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, to all thoſe who ſhall ſincerely obey him; *This* (ſays our Saviour) ye ought not to be ſurprized at, as a new and ſtrange Doctrine; ſince ye have a repreſentation and prediction of it, even in your own Law. For as *Moſes* ſet up in the Wilderneſs the Figure of a Serpent, which being indeed the Likeneſs of a venomous Beaſt, yet was ſo far from having any thing of its poiſonous Nature, that on the contrary all thoſe which had been bitten by real Serpents, were immediately healed by looking up towards this Repreſentation: So the *Son of Man*, the *Angel of the Covenant*, being made in the likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, yet having really no Sin in him,

Mal. iii. 1.
Iſ. lxiii. 9.

ſhall be lifted up on the Croſs, that by the Power of his Death, ſinful men believing in him, and being enabled to conquer and forſake their Sins, may obtain remiſſion of Sin, and Everlaſting Life. *For* thus he adds in the Words of the Text, ſumming up his whole Diſcourſe; *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* SERM. IX.

THE Connexion of our Lord's Diſcourſe being thus explained; we may in the Words themſelves conſider 1*ſt*, how and in what ſenſe it is ſuppoſed, that without the coming of Chriſt into the World, Men could not but have periſhed: 2*dly*, in what Senſe it is affirmed, that all who believe in him, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life: and 3*dly*, we may take Notice, that this Salvation of Men by the Coming of Chriſt is aſcribed to the antecedent Love of God, the original Goodneſs and Mercy of the Father Almighty. God *ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

SERM. IX.

1*ſt*, WE are to conſider, how it is *ſuppoſed* in the words of the Text, that without the Coming of Chriſt into the World, Men could not but have periſhed. And for the clearer explaining the ground of this Suppoſition, it may be proper to obſerve in the *firſt* place, that when God originally created Man in the State of *Innocence*, and ſeated him in the Garden of Paradice, there was no *Obligation* upon *God* to indue him with Immortality. 'Twas not by Virtue of any Claim of *Right*, or by any *Neceſſity* in the Nature of the Thing, but an Effect of his unbounded *Goodneſs* only, and a mere *free Gift*, that *God created Man to be Immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity*. He might juſtly have created him for what Time he pleaſed; and even in the State of *Innocence*, might without any Wrong have put a Period to That Being, which at firſt 'twas nothing but his own good Pleaſure, that moved him to give Beginning to at all. And if This was the Caſe even in the State of *Innocence* itſelf, how much more when Man by Sin had forfeited all Title to the Divine Favour! If God was under no Obligation

to

SERM. IX.

to give Immortality to the immediate Work of his own Hands, how much leſs to the Poſterity of a fallen Sinner! and what claim could *They* have to the perpetual injoyment of Paradice, which to their Firſt Parent himſelf, even in his moſt perfect State of Innocence, was but a Free Gift! Undoubtedly nothing is more evident, than that God might without any Wrong have left them All to the natural Conſequences of their own Mortality, and without any Injury to them might have forborn to make that Promiſe of eternal Life in Chriſt, which the World would have had no Right to demand, even though there had never been in it any Sin. But then we are alſo to obſerve *further*, that All the Sons of *Adam* are moreover Sinners *themſelves*; and as by the Sin of *Adam* they became in the *Courſe of Nature* excluded out of Paradice, and from the Tree of Life, and from the Hopes of Immortality; ſo by their *own* Sins they became farther, and in a more proper Senſe, liable to the Wrath of God; and ſubject, not only to *Death*, which came *equally* and *univerſally* upon All; but alſo to *actual Puniſhments*

SERM. IX.

ments in the future State, *proportionable* to every man's *private* Sin and *perſonal* Demerit. From which *common Death*, coming *equally* upon *All*; and from which *proportionable Puniſhment*, due to *every* man's *particular* Sins; nothing, that Sinners themſelves could do, could avail to reſcue them, or to prevent their *periſhing* according to the Courſe of Nature, and the righteous Judgment of God. For God, whoſe Promiſe of Immortality even to *Innocent* Creatures, was but a Free Gift of mere Bounty, was much leſs under any Obligation to provide a Place of eternal Happineſs for the Poſterity of a ſinful Parent, themſelves, alſo actual Sinners, and at the beſt but very imperfect and undeſerving Penitents; whoſe greateſt Endeavours of Repentance, could at the moſt but afford ground of Hope for an Abatement of Puniſhment, and not any Expectation of Reward. The Suppoſition therefore in the Text, is by no means diſagreeable to Reaſon; that, without the Coming of Chriſt into the World, Men could not but have *periſhed:* Thoſe who *themſelves* had ſinned after the ſimilitude of *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion, being neceſſarily

ceſſarily liable to the wrath of God, and to the proportionable *actual Puniſhment* of their Sins; and thoſe who had not ſinned in their own Perſons, being yet unavoidably in the Courſe of Nature involved in that *common Death*, from which *God* was not under any Obligation to reſcue them; ſeeing it was his *Free* Gift to give them Being at all, and that even in the State of *Innocence* itſelf He had been under no Obligation to indue them with Immortality. SERM. IX.

THIS ſeems, ſtrictly and accurately ſpeaking, to have been the True State of *All Mankind*, when conſidered as antecedent to the Promiſe of Chriſt's Coming. But it deſerves alſo to be taken Notice of, that as in moſt other places, ſo in the Text likewiſe, 'tis probable that when men's *Periſhing* is ſpoken of, it is not ſo much to be underſtood in that *ſtrict Senſe*, wherein *Every man whatſoever* is liable, more or leſs, to the Wrath of God; as in that more *general and uſual Senſe*, wherein both *Jews* and *Gentiles* are repreſented as being for the *greateſt part* by an univerſal Corruption of Manners loſt in Sin, and utterly fallen *ſhort of the Glory of God.*

SERM. IX.

The *Jews*, had in their Law itſelf, no Expiation appointed for great and wilful Tranſgreſſions; And therefore *through* Chriſt was *preacht unto* them *the forgiveneſs of Sins*; that *by him, all that believe* might be *juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes*, Acts xiii. 39. and Rom. viii. 3. *What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and for Sin, condemned Sin in the Fleſh.* The *Gentiles*, are juſtly repreſented by St *Paul*, as being *Enemies* to God; *walking* generally *in the Vanity of their Mind*; *Having the Underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their Heart*; *who being paſt feeling*, (having loſt all ſenſe of the natural and eſſential Difference of Good and Evil,) *have given themſelves over-----to work all Uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, Eph. iv. 18. This was too plainly the caſe of the greateſt part of the *Gentile*-World in the Apoſtles Time. And though there be among *Us*, ſome Deniers of the Goſpel of Chriſt, who pretend

tend that by the Light of Reaſon, without any Belief of Revelation, they can make out the Obligations of Morality, and teach men the Practiſe of Virtue and their natural Duty both towards God and Man; yet the beſt and principal of thoſe Reaſonings they are inabled to make uſe of even concerning *natural* Religion itſelf, are evidently owing to that Light and Improvement, which has ariſen from the Preaching of the *Goſpel of Chriſt.* Had the Knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion never been propagated amongſt Us, we had ſtill, like our barbarous Anceſtors, been Worſhipping of Stocks and Stones in the Darkneſs of moſt ſtupid Ignorance: And thoſe very Perſons, who now indeavour to turn againſt Chriſtianity, thoſe Arguments for the Reaſonableneſs of Natural Religion, which without the Knowledge of the Goſpel they would never have been able to diſcover; far from improving themſelves, as they fondly imagine, under the Light of Nature, had then in all probability been deſtitute of the common Principles even of Civility and Humanity. 'Tis to the Mercy of the Goſpel therefore, that theſe Perſons

SERM. IX. Perſons owe their being *Now* in a State ſo different from that of the *Gentiles* in the Apoſtles Times, who, by their total Corruption, were in a State of abſolute *Enmity againſt God*, and liable to his ſevereſt Wrath. Without the Knowledge of Chriſt, it cannot be doubted but the greateſt part of *Us*, who now are apt to think ſo highly of our own Improvements, would have been in the Caſe of thoſe, who *not liking to retain God in their Knowledge*, were *given up unto vile Affections*, and *received in themſelves That recompence of their Error, which was meet, being drowned in Deſtruction and Perdition.* And thoſe who, by eſcaping the greater Pollutions, would not indeed have been involved in the ſame *degree of Perdition* with the reſt, (for the Judge of all the Earth will always do what is Right,) yet would have had *no Title* to that eternal Inheritance, that heavenly Kingdom, which is the *Free Gift* of God in Chriſt; an undeſerved Gift, which nothing that Men could do of themſelves, even when they had done their whole Duty, could at all have merited, or (without the Sanctification of the Spirit of God,)

God,) have qualified them for. For, *Except a man be born* from above, (ſo the words are in the original, which we render, *Except a man be born again*;) *Except a man be born* from above, *except he be born of Water and of the* Spirit, *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, Joh. iii. 3, 5. *Neither is there Salvation in any other*, Acts iv. 12. *For there is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved*; i. e. whereby we can attain *that* Kingdom of Heaven, *that* free Gift of eternal Life, *that* Place peculiarly *prepared* by Chriſt for his Diſciples out of the *Many Manſions in his Father's Houſe, that* Weight of Glory and unſpeakable Reward, undeſerved even by our beſt Performances. Very *agreeable* to *Reaſon* therefore is the Suppoſition in the Text, that, without the coming of Chriſt into the World, men, in the manner before explained, could not but have *periſhed.* SERM. IX.

2*dly*, THE Second thing to be conſidered in the Text, is; in what Senſe 'tis affirm'd, that *All who* believe *in* Chriſt, *ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* Of which Kind, there are frequent *general*

SERM. IX.

ral Aſſertions in Scripture. *Acts* x. 43. *Through his Name, whoſoever* believeth *in him, ſhall receive Remiſſion of Sins*; and ch. xiii. 39. *By him, all that* believe, *are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes.* St *John* in like manner in his Firſt Epiſtle, ch. v. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life; Theſe things have I written unto you that* believe *on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal Life.* And our Saviour himſelf, in the Goſpel, St *John* iii. 36. *He that* believeth *on the Son, hath everlaſting Life*; and in the words immediately before thoſe of the Text, ver. 14. *As Moſes lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderneſs, even ſo muſt the Son of Man be lifted up; That whoſoever* believeth *in him, ſhould not periſh, but have eternal Life.* There have been ſome ſo abſurd, as from theſe and other the like paſſages in the New Teſtament, to conclude that by *Faith* only, *viz.* by a bare Aſſent to the Truth of the Chriſtian Doctrine, or by a confident Perſwaſion of their belonging to Chriſt, they ſhould not fail of Obtaining

ing Salvation. But the contrary is plain both from the Reaſon of the thing itſelf, and from numberleſs other paſſages of Scripture: That, when it is affirmed, that whoſoever *believeth* in Chriſt, *ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life*; the meaning is not, whoſoever *profeſſeth* or *pretends* to believe in him, but whoſoever *really* believes in him, and *with Effect*; whoſoever is *ſo* perſwaded of the Truth of his Doctrine, as to embrace the *Terms* propoſed by the Goſpel, and to make them the Rule of his Life and Actions. For as, in all other caſes, things are judged of not by their *mere Denomination* and *external Appearances*, but by their *inward Powers or Qualities*, and by their *real Effects*; and *Shadows* are not taken for *Subſtances*, nor *Pictures* for the *Things themſelves* which they repreſent, notwithſtanding their being called perhaps by the ſame *Names*: So, *believing in Chriſt*, is not barely profeſſing *to believe in him*, but *believing in him* indeed; believing his Doctrine to be *True*; conſidering it accordingly as of the utmoſt *Importance*; endeavouring conſequently to underſtand it *ourſelves*, and not truſting

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. ing ourſelves to be impoſed upon by *Others*; and finally, *governing ourſelves by it* in all our Actions, in the whole Courſe of our Lives. For the word *Faith*, always contains in it the Notion of *Faithfulneſs* or *Fidelity*. And though the plain Reaſon of the Thing itſelf might be ſufficient in ſo evident a Caſe; yet the Scripture is not wanting to explain it alſo in variety of Words. *He that believeth*, (ſays our Saviour in another place,) *and is* baptized, *i. e.* and enters into an obligation to *live ſuitably* to That Belief; *he* ſhall be ſaved. For, *not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that* doth *the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And *being baptized*, ſaith St *Peter*, is not *the waſhing away of the filth of the Fleſh, but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God.* And *the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*, is the *Faith* which *worketh*, or evidences itſelf, *by Love*: For *the End of the Commandment*, ſaith St *Paul, is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conſcience, and of Faith unfeigned*, 1 Tim. i. 5.

ALL

SERM. IX.

ALL that *believe* therefore, are *All* that *embrace* and *obey* the Goſpel. For Theſe, Chriſt came into the World on purpoſe, that they *might not periſh, but have everlaſting Life:* And becauſe the Goſpel was commanded to be preached to *every Creature*, that is, to all mankind; and God has expreſsly declared, that he would have *all men* to be ſaved; and deſireth not that *any* ſhould periſh, but that *All* might come to Repentance; therefore we may reaſonably underſtand the Words in the Text, *whoſoever believeth in him*, as if it had been Thus expreſſed: God gave his Son, that *Every one*, by *believing in him*; that *every man*, by *his* means, and by accepting the advantage and gracious Terms of the Goſpel; might avoid periſhing, and obtain everlaſting Life. And This Senſe of the Phraſe is juſtified, by the Words immediately following the Text, ver. 17. *For God ſent not his Son into the World, to condemn the World, but that the* World, that the *whole* World, *through him might be ſaved.* Thoſe to whom the Goſpel is actually preached, have this Salvation *clearly* offered them, unleſs they reject it by their wilful

SERM. IX. wilful Impenitence. The Jews and Patriarchs had it no leſs *certainly*, though more obſcurely, repoſited in the expectation of him that was to come: And thoſe who never heard either of the Law or the Goſpel, yet have it *effectually* laid up for them, (though without their having any preſent Knowledge of it,) in that declaration of the Apoſtle, that *they which have not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves*; and that *their uncircumciſion*, if they *keep the Law*, ſhall (through the blood of Chriſt, though not explicitly made known amongſt them,) *be counted to them for circumciſion*. Thus God ſhall univerſally be juſtified, when he appears in Judgment; and *All mouths* ſhall be ſtopped before him.

AND This may ſuffice for Explication of the 2*d* particular that was to be conſidered in the Text, *viz.* in what Senſe it is affirmed, that *all who* believe *in Chriſt, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

3*dly*, WE are in the laſt place to take Notice, that This Salvation of Men by the Coming of Chriſt, is aſcribed to the antecedent Love of God, the original Mercy

Mercy and Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. God *ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* It is a falſe Notion which ſome men have taken up of God, and very injurious to Religion, to conceive *God* in his own Nature to be a ſevere and mercileſs Puniſher; to look upon him as a Cruel Exerciſer of irreſiſtible Power, as an Object only of dread and horror; to imagine, that, contrary to his own Inclination, and as it were *againſt* his Will, he was prevailed upon by Chriſt to take Pity on his Creatures, as a Cruel and Paſſionate Man is ſometimes over-ruled by his Friend, to be better than his Intention. No; All This is a very unjuſt Repreſentation of God; The hard Speeches which ignorant or unrighteous men have ſpoken againſt him. The *Scripture* on the contrary, as well as *Natural Reaſon*, always ſets forth God as the Supreme Fountain of Goodneſs; the Preſerver, not the Enemy and Deſtroyer, of his Creatures. 'Twas not the interpoſition of Chriſt, which *changed* the Mind of God; but 'twas the original Goodneſs and Love

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

of God, which *appointed* for us the Interpoſition of Chriſt. To puniſh Sinners, and deſtroy Wickedneſs out of his Kingdom, is indeed the neceſſary Office even of That Governour who is Goodneſs itſelf; and therefore, in order to diſcourage Sin, he thought fit it ſhould be pardoned by no eaſier a Method, than by the Incarnation and Death of his Son. Yet 'twas his Goodneſs only that moved him to contrive that Method; and his original Love to his Creatures, that put him upon ſo reconciling Mercy with Juſtice. God did not *hate* the World, and ſuffer the Interceſſion of Chriſt to prevail over that Hatred; but God *loved* the World, and *therefore gave* his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. And hence it is, that the *Father* is ſtiled (by way of eminence) *God our Saviour:* Tit. iii. 4, 6. *The Kindneſs and Love of* God our Saviour, —— *which he ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.* But this is a Subject of ſuch importance, that it deſerves to be treated of more particularly in a following Diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of the LOVE *of* GOD *towards Sinners.*

St JOHN iii. 16.

For God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.

SERM. X.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I have propoſed to conſider the following particulars; 1*ſt*, how and in what ſenſe it is *præſuppoſed* in the Text, that without the Coming of Chriſt into the World, men *could not but* have periſhed. 2*dly*, In what Senſe it is

SERM. X. affirmed, that *All* who *believe* in him ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. And 3*dly*, that this Salvation of Men by the Coming of Chriſt, is aſcribed to the Antecedent Love of God, the Original Mercy and Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. *God* ſo *loved* the World, that he *gave his only begotten Son*, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. The Two former of theſe Propoſitions I have already diſcourſed of; and ſhall therefore at this Time proceed directly to the *Third*; namely, to obſerve, that in the Words of the Text, the Salvation of Men by the Coming of Chriſt, is expreſsly aſcribed to the Antecedent Love of God, the original eſſential Mercy and Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. *God* ſo *loved* the World, that *he gave* his only-begotten Son. And This is neceſſarily to be obſerved, in Vindication of the eſſential *Goodneſs of God*, which is one of the primary Attributes of the Divine Nature; and in oppoſition to thoſe, who while they think they magnify the Redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt, (which can never indeed be too much

2

much magnified in a *conſiſtent* manner,) ſeem to forget the equal Neceſſity, of maintaining at the ſame Time all the original Attributes of God; and are not ſufficiently aware of the Danger, of repreſenting *one* Method of God's acting, as inconſiſtent with *another*; or *any* of God's actions *ſo*, as to be *contradictory* to his *Nature* or any of his *Attributes*. For ſince Truth cannot be contrary to itſelf; and *every* true Doctrine muſt of Neceſſity be agreeable, and in perfect harmony on all ſides with every *other* true Doctrine whatſoever; 'tis of the utmoſt importance to Religion, that we take Care never to repreſent any *one* part of its Doctrine in ſuch a manner, as to deſtroy *another*; leaſt *That* alſo in its turn deſtroy the *preſent* Notion; and ſo *Both* give Advantage to the ſceptical Unbeliever. 'Tis not eaſy to imagine, *how much* Religion has frequently ſuffered by this very means; and what occaſion has been given to the profane Adverſary to blaſpheme, whilſt the unwary carrying *particular* Doctrines too far, and preſſing them by Arguments not well conſiſtent with *other* Doctrines of equal Neceſſity, have afforded too plauſible

SERM. X.

SERM. X.

Grounds of Objecting againſt the *Whole*. What I am now ſpeaking of, will beſt be underſtood, by *inſtancing* in *particular Inſtances*. The *Juſtice* of God, may ſeem to be moſt highly magnified, by ſuppoſing that it puts an abſolute *Neceſſity* upon him, either of inflicting an infinite Puniſhment, or of demanding an infinite Satisfaction. But they who ſo ſpeak, ought at the ſame time to conſider on the other hand, that they leave no room either for Goodneſs or Mercy: And that the Scripture on the contrary always ſpeaks, even of the Satisfaction of *Chriſt*, not as a Price or Equivalent which made our Pardon *due* by a Claim of *Right*; but as a Means *freely* appointed, and *freely* accepted, by the mere Mercy and Compaſſion of the Father, who, as Supreme Governour of all things, remits voluntarily of his own Right, in what Meaſure and upon what Terms he pleaſes.

IN like manner the *Grace* of God, ſome Men imagine they greatly magnify, when they aſcribe to its operation the *whole* and *entire* Progreſs of every good work. But if they would look at the ſame

ſame time on the other part of the Queſtion, they might find, that by leaving nothing at all for the *Will of Man* to do, they make him to be a Subject no more capable of Religion, than the Beaſts that periſh, or even than lifeleſs Matter itſelf. SERM. X.

AGAIN; The Merit *of good Works*, which the Church of *Rome* boaſts of, is indeed effectually deſtroyed, by making good Works to be *of no importance at all* towards Juſtification, and by aſcribing the Whole to *Faith only*. But they who ſo deſtroy Merit, ſhould not be ignorant, that at the ſame time and with the ſame Argument, taking away the Neceſſity of Virtue and of good Manners, they deſtroy alſo the very Foundation of *all Religion*.

To give an inſtance or two of another kind. The *Authority of Councils*, or of *any humane* Power, to determine Matters of Faith; is indeed a moſt effectual Means, of putting a perpetual ſtop to all kinds of Schiſm, and to all Diviſions whatſoever in Matters of Religion: But he that uſes this Argument againſt an Adverſary *before* him, ought not to be

SERM. X. unaware, that there is another *behind* him, who makes uſe of the very ſame Argument even with greater Force againſt *Him*; For the Church of *Rome* has plainly the greateſt and the moſt univerſal Weight of *human Authority*, which God ever permitted to oppreſs fair and impartial Inquiry after the Truth.

AGAIN; the *Divinity of Chriſt*, may ſeem to be moſt earneſtly and zealouſly contended for, by thoſe who confound it with the Supreme Independency and Self-exiſtence of the Perſon of the Father: But if they conſidered on the other hand, how in ſo doing they either deſtroyed the moſt Fundamental Principle of *all* Religion, the *Unity* of God; or elſe the firſt Principle of *Chriſtian* Religion, the *Being* of the Son of God; it would appear that they knew rightly, neither the Father nor the Son.

Laſtly; TO inſtance in the Doctrine of the Text, the *Coming of Chriſt* into the World for the *Redemption of Mankind*; It may ſeem indeed at firſt ſight to be a pious extolling the Love of our Saviour, and the Greatneſs of the Work he undertook; to aggravate the natural

Miſery

Miſery of Mankind, to repreſent in the terribleſt Colours the Severity of the Juſtice of an incenſed God, and to deſcribe the Supreme Father and Creator of all things, as having no Thoughts of Pity or Compaſſion towards his periſhing Creatures, till moved thereto as it were *againſt* his original Intention, by the Interpoſition of Chriſt. But they who thus argue, ought on the other hand to be aware, that 'tis no leſs injurious to Religion, to diminiſh the original Goodneſs and Compaſſion of the *Father of Mercies*, than 'tis pious to be worthily ſenſible of the greatneſs of the Redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt. A true and ſincere Chriſtian, will after a conſiſtent manner magnify the Love of *Chriſt*, in *dying* for our Sins; and the Mercy of *God*, in *ſending* him to die for that Purpoſe, in chooſing and in accepting that Attonement. God *ſo loved the World, that* he gave *his only-begotten Son*; (and the *only-begotten Son* ſo loved the World, that he was *willing to be given*, for our Redemption;) that *whoſoever believeth on him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life*. The Salvation of Men therefore, is owing SERM. X.

SERM. X.

owing *both* to the *Redemption* of *Chriſt*, who gave himſelf for us; and to the antecedent *Love* and original eſſential Goodneſs of *the Father Almighty*, who was pleaſed to appoint and to accept that Sacrifice. Nor is it ſo great an Argument of the *Severity* of God, that he would not pardon Sinners without the Death of his Son; as it is of his eſſential *Goodneſs* and *Compaſſion*, that he would rather appoint his Son to die, than that ſinful man ſhould not be pardoned. He that appoints the *Means*, thereby declares his Choice and Approbation of the *End*: And if God, had not been by Nature, originally and eſſentially Good and Merciful, he would no more have *accepted* any Propitiation *for* Sin, than he would have pardoned it *without* any. Moſt unjuſtly therefore, and with great injury to Religion, is God ſometimes repreſented as an implacable and cruel Judge, delighting in the deſtruction of Sinners, till they were *taken* (as it were) out of his Hands by the Interpoſition of Chriſt; This (I ſay) is a very injurious Repreſentation, of the Great God and Father of Mercies: For, the Coming of Chriſt, was not the

firſt

firſt Cauſe of the Goodneſs and Love of God towards us; but the eſſential and eternal Goodneſs of God, was the cauſe and reaſon of the Coming of Chriſt. *God ſo* loved *the World*, ſays our Saviour, *that he* gave *his only-begotten Son.* It became the Supreme Governour of the Univerſe, to puniſh Sin: And yet he ſo loved the World, and had ſuch Compaſſion upon the Work of his Hands, that he was willing to find an Expedient by which ſinful man might be pardoned and ſaved, without giving encouragement to Sin; and therefore *he* gave *his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* SERM. X.

THE words of the Text, are Each of them very emphatically ſignificant, and ſtrongly expreſſive of that glorious Attribute of the Divine Nature, his eſſential and eternal Goodneſs. *God*, even the Father and Lord of all things, who diſpoſes all things according to the pleaſure of his own Will, and whoſe Actions can be determined by Nothing Without Himſelf; *He* ſo *loved the World*, was ſo moved by the original and eternal Goodneſs of his own Nature, to have Compaſſion

SERM. X. paſſion upon the Work of his Hands; that he *gave*, freely and out of mere Bounty, without any Obligation, and without any Conſtraint; he gave *his* Son out of his Boſom, his *only-begotten Son*, the *Son of his Love*, to die for the Sins of Men; that ſo, though it was not fit, in his Wiſdom and Government of the World, that *Sin* ſhould paſs unpuniſhed; yet by this means, *Sinners* believing on him, and being by him brought to Repentance, might not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. He might juſtly have ſent his Son to take *Vengeance* upon a ſinful World; to *deſtroy* it *totally*, as he did before *in part* at the overthrow of *Sodom*; and to do it *finally*, as he had before done it *for a Time* at the general Deluge. But on the contrary our Saviour declares, that *Mercy* prevailed over Judgment; that *God ſo loved the World*, (that is, was ſo moved by his own internal Goodneſs to have compaſſion upon Sinners,) that he *ſent his Son into the World, not to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be ſaved*, Joh. iii. 17. In *later* Ages, Many have been uſed to ſpeak otherwiſe; and to repreſent God as clothed with

with the mere Severity of a rigorous and ſtrict Judge, till his Wrath was, (as it were, *contrary to* his own Intention,) appeaſed and pacified by the Interceſſion of Chriſt. And This has made Some very pious Perſons look upon God as an Object of the greateſt *Terror*, who on the contrary ought above all things to be *Loved* as the moſt perfect Good: For, comparatively ſpeaking, *There is None Good, ſaith* our Saviour, *but One, that is, God.* To *Sinners* indeed, ſo long as they continue *Impenitent*, *God* cannot but be very juſtly an Object of the utmoſt Dread. And ſo alſo indeed is even *our Saviour himſelf*, who died for them: For thus the Scripture emphatically repreſents their Caſe, *Rev.* vi. 16. that they ſhall *ſay to the Mountains and to the Rocks, Fall on us; and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the Wrath of the* Lamb. To *impenitent* Sinners, the Wrath of the *Lamb* himſelf is no leſs terrible, than even the Face of him that ſitteth upon the Throne. But on the contrary, to Sinners truly *penitent*, and to All who ſincerely endeavour to obey the Will of God; not only the Love of *Chriſt*,

SERM. X.

SERM. X.

Chriſt, which is the *mediating* Cauſe, but the antecedent Love and eſſential Goodneſs of *the Father Almighty*, which is the *primary and original* Cauſe of their Salvation, is always in Scripture repreſented and laid before them as a *Motive of Gratitude*, and as a principal Argument to excite in *Them* ſuitable Returns of Love and Obedience to *Him*. In the twentieth chapter of the *Acts*, ver. 24. St *Paul* calls his Apoſtleſhip *the Miniſtry which he had received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the Goſpel of the grace of God*; *the Goſpel of the Grace of God*, i. e. the gracious declaration of *God*'s Love and Favour towards Mankind, manifeſted by *Chriſt*. In his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. i. ver. 1, 3, 5. he ſtiles it the *Goſpel of God, concerning his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, by whom we have received grace*; *Grace*, that is, the gracious Manifeſtation of *God*'s Compaſſion towards Sinners in the Goſpel. Ch. iii, 22, 25. he calls it the righteouſneſs *of God, which is by Faith of Jeſus Chriſt*; *whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his* righteouſneſs *for the remiſſion of Sins that are paſt, through the*

forbearance of God. The Righteouſneſs *of God* in ſending Chriſt for the remiſſion of our Sins, is a phraſe that ſounds harſh in modern language: But in the Jewiſh Speech, becauſe *righteous and good* men are *apt* to be moved with *compaſſion*, therefore they have but one and the ſame Word to expreſs both *Righteouſneſs* and *charitable Pity*. From whence, both in the Old and New Teſtament, the word *Righteouſneſs* muſt frequently be underſtood to ſignify, not ſtrict *Juſtice*, but *Equity*, *Charity*, *Forbearance*, and *Compaſſion*: And particularly in the place now cited, the Righteouſneſs *of God* in ſending Chriſt, ſignifies, not any *Obligation* upon him in *Juſtice* ſo to do, but his *Goodneſs* and *Mercy* moving him to do it. In the ſame Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. v. 5, 6, 8, 15. he Thus deſcribes the ſtate of the Goſpel; that the Love of God *is ſhed abroad in our Hearts*, becauſe *when we were yet without ſtrength, in due time* Chriſt *died for the Ungodly*; And, that God *commendeth his* Love *towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners*, Chriſt *died for us*; And that, as *through the offence of One*, viz. by the Occaſion of *Adam*'s Sin, *Many*

SERM. X.

SERM. X. *Many be dead*; ſo, and *much more, the* Grace *of* God *and the Gift by Grace*, i. e. the Love and Favour of God, *by one Man, Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto Many.* And ch. viii. 32. He draws an Argument of *further* Hope, from *this very* conſideration; *He that* ſpared not *his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not*, with Him, *alſo freely give us all things?* 'Tis the ſame Argument, which the wife of *Manoah* had of old made uſe of, *Judg.* xiii. 23. *If the Lord were* pleaſed *to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering at our Hands.* Again, in the Second Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ch. v. the Apoſtle repreſents God, not only as *conſenting* to our redemption by Chriſt, and being the *original Author* of it, ver. 18. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt*; but he carries it ſtill much further, ver. 20. *As though God did* beſeech *you by Us, we* pray *you* (ſaith he) *in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.* This is not the Character of a mercileſs and Cruel Judge; to be himſelf not only the *Author* of man's Redemption by *Sending* his Son, but even to *beſeech* us alſo to accept

accept him when he is ſent? *As I live,* ſaith the Lord God, *I have no pleaſure in the Death of him that dieth, but rather that he ſhould turn from his Ways and live.* Nor are theſe *figurative* Expreſſions, or the incidental repreſentations of Single Texts; but they are the *whole Tenour* of Scripture, inculcating This Notion perpetually, as of the *greateſt importance* to Religion. Thus the ſame Apoſtle St *Paul* again, in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, ch ii. 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13. God, ſaith he, *who is rich in Mercy, for his great* Love *wherewith he* loved *us, even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickned us together with Chriſt;* ---- *That in the Ages to come he might ſhow the exceeding* Riches *of his Grace, in his* Kindneſs *towards us* through *Chriſt Jeſus:* ---- *For we are* His *workmanſhip, created* in *Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which* God *hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in them; Wherefore remember that ye being in time paſt Gentiles in the fleſh, who are called Uncircumciſion by that which is called the Circumciſion in the fleſh made by hands, that at that time ye were without Chriſt, being aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael,* SERM. X.

SERM. X. *and Strangers from the covenants of Pro-miſe, having no hope, and without God in the world; But now in Chriſt Jeſus ye who ſometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt.* And in 2 *Theſ.* ii. 13, 14. *We are bound to give thanks al-ways to* God *for you,* ----*becauſe* God *hath from the beginning choſen you to Salvation* ----*whereunto* he *called you by our Goſpel to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* And ver. 16. *Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, and* God, even our Father, *which hath* loved *us and hath given us everlaſting conſolation, and good hope through grace,* ----*ſtabliſh you in every good Word and Work.* Again, 2 *Tim.* i. 9. God----*hath ſaved us, and called us*---*according to his* own *Purpoſe and Grace which was given us* in *Chriſt Jeſus before the World began:* And *Tit.* iii. 4, 6. *After that the* Kindneſs *and* Love *of* God our Saviour *toward Man appeared;*---*which* He *ſhed on us abundantly through* Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour: The expreſſion is *very* remarkable, that ſpeaking of the *Love* of *the Father* towards us, he calls *Him* by the Title of *Saviour* in the *firſt* place: *The Kindneſs and Love of* God *our Saviour*

Saviour, which he *ſhed on us through* Jeſus Chriſt *our Saviour.* The Apoſtle St *John* in like manner, 1 *Joh.* iii. 1, 16. *Behold* (ſaith he) *what manner of* Love, *the* Father *hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God: Hereby perceive we the* Love *of* God, *becauſe* He (that is, *Chriſt*) *laid down his Life for us:* And ch. iv. 9. very nearly repeating the Words of our Saviour in the Text, *In This* (ſaith he) *was manifeſted the* Love *of* God *towards us, becauſe that* God ſent *his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him.* Theſe and numberleſs other the like paſſages in Scripture, do ſufficiently declare, what I at firſt propoſed to prove in Vindication of the Divine Attributes, *viz.* that the Salvation of men by the Coming of Chriſt, is and ought to be aſcribed primarily to the Antecedent Love and Original eſſential Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. God *ſo loved the World, that he* gave *his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

SERM. X.

SERM. X.

IT remains that I conclude, with drawing ſome uſeful Inferences from what has been ſaid upon This Subject.

And *1ſt*, FROM hence we may obſerve, that every Doctrine of Truth, is conſiſtent both with *itſelf*, and with every *other* Truth; and ſtands clear of Objections, equally on *All* ſides. Upon *ſome Repreſentations* of the *Severity* of *God*, and of the *Miſery* of *Men*, Unbelievers have been encouraged to object: If pefect Goodneſs be an eſſential Attribute of the Divine Nature, how then could God, who is infinitely Good, leave all men to periſh, antecedently to the conſideration of the Coming of Chriſt? The Anſwer is obvious: *God* did not cauſe Men to periſh, but their *own Wickedneſs* made it neceſſary for the Wiſdom of a perfectly Good Governour to puniſh and deſtroy them. And yet his Juſtice and Wiſdom were not more ſpeedy in condemning them, than his Goodneſs in moving him to find a means of bringing them to *Recovery* by Repentance, and to *Salvation* by Chriſt. And This Goodneſs did not firſt manifeſt itſelf at the Coming of Chriſt; but the Apoſtl

Apoſtle aſſures us it was *given us in Chriſt Jeſus* before the World *began*, 2 Tim. i. 9. It was promiſed to *Adam*, it was repeated to the Patriarchs, it was declared by the Prophets; it was fulfilled in Chriſt: And both *before* and *ſince* the Coming of Chriſt, it has been made good to thoſe, who obſerved the *Law*, and who obeyed the *Goſpel*, and to thoſe who (without the Knowledge of Either) have been (as St *Paul* deſcribes them) *a Law unto themſelves.* In this whole Tranſaction, the *Goodneſs* of God has manifeſted itſelf abundantly, in doing what he was by no means *bound* to do, what no Power could have *conſtrained* him to do, what to *Himſelf* was *no Benefit* or Advantage; (For he could as eaſily out of the *Stones* have raiſed up Children unto *Abraham*, according to the elegant expreſſion of St *John the Baptiſt*, as have prevailed with the real Children of *Abraham* to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance:) Laſtly, 'twas doing That, which brought the *greateſt Sufferings*, (not indeed *neceſſarily*, for That would not have been juſt; but *freely* and *voluntarily*,) *upon the Perſon who was*

SERM. X.

SERM. X.

moſt dear to him, even his only-begotten and moſt beloved Son. And *What greater* Inſtance of Goodneſs and Bounty than This, can poſſibly be conceived? Had God, *without* requiring any Propitiation at all, freely forgiven all Sins upon Repentance; This (no doubt) would by all have been eſteemed an Act ſufficiently evidencing that perfect Goodneſs and Mercy which is an eſſential Attribute of the Divine Nature: But now, freely and of his own meer Bounty, to *find out and appoint* a Propitiation; is, with regard to his *Goodneſs* towards *Us*, the very ſame thing, as *requiring no Atonement at all* would have been; and, at the ſame time, 'tis more *agreeable* to the Exerciſe of his *Other* Attributes, in the Government of the World. Neither therefore is the *eſſential Goodneſs* of God, in any wiſe inconſiſtent with that *Severity* againſt Sin, which made the Incarnation of Chriſt neceſſary to mens Salvation; Nor on the other ſide is that *Severity*, wherewith God condemns men antecedent to their redemption by Chriſt, at all inconſiſtent with the moſt perfect Notion of eſſential Goodneſs.

2*dly*,

SERM. X.

2*dly*, FROM what has been ſaid, we may obſerve, of how great Importance it is to Religion, to frame right and worthy Notions concerning the *Attributes* and the *Actions* of God. The Foundation of Religion is the *Love* of God; and no Man can love whom he does not think well of. The Service of a Tyrant, is Slavery: And where there is not a Reverence, mixt with the Affection of *Love* as well as Fear, there the Obedience can be but Formal and External, without the Heart and without Life. 'Tis therefore of the greateſt Conſequence in Religion, that men entertain not hard and diſhonourable Thoughts of God. To repreſent God, as chooſing and delighting to make Men extremely miſerable, or as being originally and of Himſelf mercileſsly ſevere, may indeed at firſt Sight to inconſiderate Perſons ſeem to magnify the Redemption purchaſed by Chriſt: But in reality, by deſtroying our natural Notion of God's eſſential Goodneſs, it deſtroys the firſt Principle and Foundation of Religion. God is, of Himſelf, the Father of Mercies: But becauſe, in the All-wiſe government of the World, it was fit and

SERM. X. neceſſary that Sin ſhould not go unpuniſhed, therefore this Mercy could not be manifeſted to us, but thro' the Son of his Love. Yet ſtill 'twas the ſame God, who, moved by his *own* Compaſſion, ſhowed us mercy in his Son; And the Scripture is againſt no perſons more ſevere, than againſt thoſe who ſpeak hardly, and unworthily, of God. One part of the great and final judgment, as repreſented by St *Jude*, is to *convince men of all their* hard ſpeeches *which they have ſpoken againſt him*, ver. 15. And ſevere is the reproof given upon this Account to the ſlothful Servant in the Parable, St *Luk.* xix. 22. *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee;*----*Thou kneweſt that I was an auſtere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not ſow.* And 1 Sam. ii. 2, 3. *There is none Holy as the Lord;*---*let not arrogancy* (in the original it is, *let not Hard words*) *come out of your Mouth.* And Mal. iii. 13. *Your Words have been ſtout againſt me, ſaith the Lord; Yet ye ſay, What have we ſpoken ſo much againſt thee? Ye have ſaid, It is vain to ſerve God, and what profit is it that we have*----*walked mournfully before*

fore him? 'Tis therefore plainly injurious to religion, to entertain *hard* Thoughts of God, in diminution of his original and eſſential Goodneſs. Nevertheleſs on the contrary it ought alſo to be obſerved, that 'tis equally dangerous for Sinners to preſume on the *other ſide* unreaſonably upon his *Love and Mercy*. For as, *before* the Coming of Chriſt, men ſtood condemned for their *Sins*; ſo, *after* his Coming alſo ſhall they be condemned for their *impenitency*. And as the *Juſtice* of God did not prevent his *Mercy* from ſending a Redeemer to ſave all true *Penitents*; ſo his *Love in Chriſt* will not prevent his *Juſtice*, from becoming to all *incorrigible* Sinners a conſuming Fire. SERM. X.

3*dly*, FROM what has been ſaid, we may learn how vain That diſtinction is, which has ſometimes been made between *Nature* and *Grace*, as if the Gifts of *Nature* and thoſe of *Grace* were oppoſite to each other; when in reality they are nothing elſe but the Gifts of the *ſame* God, *derived* to us *originally* from the *eſſential* Goodneſs of his Nature, and *improved* in us by his *reconciled* Goodneſs and Mercy through Chriſt.

4*thly*,

SERM. X.

4*thly*, FROM hence we may obſerve, how the *Satisfaction of Chriſt* is by no means inconſiſtent with the Notion of God's *Free Pardon* of Sin. For it was not, that the *Satisfaction of Chriſt* did in Strictneſs of Juſtice *oblige* him to pardon; but on the contrary, his Reſolution to pardon Sin determined him *freely to appoint and to accept that Satisfaction.*

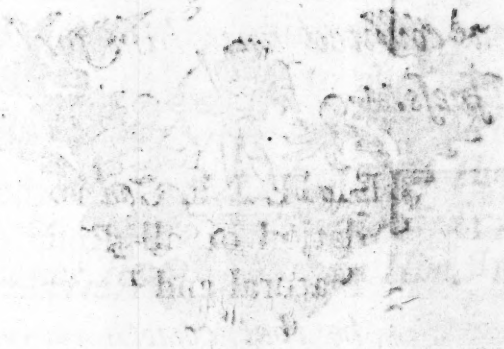
5*thly*, IF *God* ſo loved *Us*, the Application is eaſy, that *We* ought alſo to love *Him.* And *how* we are to do *That*, the Apoſtle St *John* tells us, 1 *Joh.* v. 3. *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments. Love* towards a Superiour, conſiſts properly in taking pleaſure to do his Will; in delighting to obey him and to do things acceptable to him. *Whoſo* therefore keepeth *his* Word, *in Him verily is the Love of God perfected; hereby know we that we Are in Him*, 1 Joh. ii. 5.

Laſtly, IF *God* ſo loved *us*, then ought *We* alſo, after *His* example, to love *one another.* And This is the Inference of the ſame Apoſtle St *John*, 1 Joh. iv. 7---21; wherewith I ſhall conclude: *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe*

SERM. X.

becauſe that God ſent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him;-----Beloved, if God ſo loved Us, We ought alſo to love one another.-----If a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen? And This commandment have we from Him, that He who loveth God, love his Brother alſo.

SERMON



SERMON XI.

Of BELIEVING *in* GOD.

ROM. iv. 3.

Abraham believed *God, and it was counted unto him for Righteouſneſs.*

BELIEF in *God* is the Foundation of all Religion both Natural and Revealed. For, *he that cometh to God muſt believe that He* Is, *and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Good Temper and Humanity, *may be* and often *is* the cauſe of many virtuous Actions; which, wherever they are found, ought never to go without their

SERM. XI. their juſt commendation: But the *ſteddy courſe* of a virtuous and religious life, uniform in all its parts and upon all occaſions, reſiſting all the temptations of the World, overcoming all difficulties, and perſevering to the End under all diſcouragements; this is a Superſtructure which cannot be built upon a leſs ſtrong Foundation than a firm Belief of a future State, and an Expectation of the righteous Judgment of God.

Now, as *without* Belief in God, there *can* be *no Religion*; ſo, where there *is* ſuch Belief in God, the Scripture always in courſe ſuppoſes it accompanied with every *other* part of true Religion. The *Root* is *always* ſuppoſed to have the *Branches* joined with it; and where a *Tree* is mentioned, 'tis always underſtood to be a Tree bearing its proper *Fruit*. A *Man*, never ſignifies the dead *Body* of a Man without the *Soul* or *Life*; neither does *Faith* in Scripture-phraſe ever mean the bare *Profeſſion* of men's *Belief*, without *evidence* of its *reality* by its *Effects*; except only where it is declared to be *dead* and uſeleſs. *As the Body*, ſaith St *James*, *without the Spirit, is dead*; *ſo Faith*

SERM. XI.

Faith without Works, is dead alſo, Jam. ii. 26. As, in *natural* things, to *ſeparate* Cauſes and Effects, to ſeparate things in their own nature inſeparable, to ſuppoſe the *Sun* to be without *Light*, or the *Fire* without Heat, is unnatural and abſurd: ſo, in matters of *Religion and Morality*, to ſeparate *Belief* and *Practiſe*, to ſeparate the *Obligation* to any Duty from the *Performance* of it, is, morally ſpeaking, monſtrous and impoſſible: the *one* being as contrary to *Reaſon*, which is the Rule of *Morality*, as the *other* is contrary to the courſe and poſſibilities of *nature*. For *this* reaſon both in Scripture and in common Speech, the Name of any *One* eminent Virtue, is very uſually put for the *Sum* of *All*; and he that in the inſpired Writings is commended particularly for *One* Virtue, is not thereby ſo much intended to be diſtinguiſhed for *That*, as ſuppoſed to be thereupon indued with *all others* likewiſe. *Righteouſneſs*, which properly ſignifies the *particular* Duty of fair and equitable Dealing between Man and Man, is in Scripture generally uſed for the *whole* Practice of true Religion in general. And the Character given to *Noah*,

SERM. XI.

Noah, Gen. vi. 9. that he *was a* juſt *man*; is in the very ſame verſe explained to be, that he was a man perfect *in his generation*, and that he *walked with God*. In like manner, *believing* in God; becauſe 'tis the Foundation of *Obedience* to him, and wherever it is ſincere, will naturally be *attended with* ſuch Obedience, ſignifies therefore the ſame as living *religiouſly*. Which, as it is True concerning *Religion in* general, ſo in *Chriſtianity in* particular it is ſtill *more* uſual, to put *Faith* for the *whole* Practiſe of Virtue and Religion; becauſe, as the *Foundation* of *Religion in* general, is Believing in *God*; ſo the Foundation of *Chriſtianity in* particular, is the Belief of that great *Act* of God, the raiſing his Son from the Dead, in order to judge the World in Righteouſneſs. Which is what the Apoſtle obſerves, *ver.* 23. of this chapter: *It was not written*, ſays he, *for Abraham's ſake alone, that his Faith was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs: But for* Us *alſo, to whom it ſhall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raiſed up Jeſus our Lord from the Dead.* This is the reaſon, why the *whole* Goſpel is, in the *New Teſtament*, ſo frequently called by the Name

Name of *Faith*. The *Jewiſh* Religion, is, on the contrary, through the whole *New Teſtament*, uſually ſtiled by the Name of *Works*; upon account of the numerous external Ceremonies and ritual Obſervations, which, though not in reality, yet, in the opinion and practiſe of the greater part of that Nation, were the main Body of their Religion, or that which they chiefly and moſt eagerly contended for. For ſo indeed, both in *antient* and in *modern* time, the corrupt diſpoſition of Mankind generally leads them to this one conſtant Errour; to value *moſt* in every Religion, that which is of *leaſt* importance in it; *opinions or ceremonies*, which diſtinguiſh them into different *Parties*; and not *true Virtue, Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs*, wherein all, who are indeed religious, do neceſſarily agree. The *great* Queſtion, at the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, was, whether the Practiſe of Virtue required by Chriſt in *his* Religion, was ſufficient to Salvation, without the continuation of the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies. The Argument uſed by the Apoſtle to prove that it *was* ſufficient, was, that *Abraham* their Father was *himſelf* ſaved,

SERM. XI.

SERM. XI.

not by the Obſervation of the *Rites* They laid ſuch ſtreſs upon; but by the Practiſe of the very *ſame* Virtues which the *Goſpel* now requires; inſomuch that the Scripture expreſsly affirms, that the *Goſpel* was before preached unto *Abraham*, *Gal.* iii. 8. And this Argument is at large urged in *Rom.* iv. 3. the preſent chapter, whereof my Text is a part. *Abraham's* Faith, ſays the Apoſtle, was *reckoned unto him for righteouſneſs*; and it was ſo reckoned unto him, not only *after*, but *before* his circumciſion, *ver.* 10. The acceptableneſs of his Faith therefore, did not depend upon the covenant of circumciſion, as the *Jews* imagined; but upon that right and worthy *Notion of God* from which his Faith proceeded; and upon that *conſequent Obedience*, of which his Faith was the cauſe; ver. 20. *He ſtaggered not at the promiſe of God through Unbelief*; *but gave Glory to God*; *being fully perſwaded, that what he had promiſed, he was able alſo to perform*; *and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs.* And the Application is; that *it was not written for* his *ſake alone, but for* Us *alſo, to whom it ſhall likewiſe be imputed*

SERM. XI.

ted, if we believe on Him that raiſed up Jeſus our Lord from the Dead; who was delivered for our offenſes and roſe again for our Juſtification. Which laſt words, are added to ſet forth the True Nature of Faith in Chriſt. For if the End of Chriſt's Death, was to deliver us from *Sin*; and the End of his *Reſurrection*, to bring us unto *Righteouſneſs*; 'tis evident that Faith in Chriſt is no otherwiſe of Benefit to us, then as it tends to deſtroy *Sin*, and eſtabliſh *Virtue*. Which ſhows the extreme Folly and moſt dangerous Errour of Thoſe, who ſet up Faith in oppoſition to Moral Virtue; and make the Goſpel of Chriſt a Form of *Words* only, and an *imaginary Speculation*, inſtead of being (what the Scripture always repreſents it) the *way of Righteouſneſs* and the *Holy Commandment*.

HAVING thus briefly explained the nature and ground of the Apoſtle's Argument *in general*; we may now eaſily underſtand the meaning of the words of the Text *in particular*: *Abraham* believed *God, and it was counted unto him for righteouſneſs*. *Abraham* was the great Example of Righteouſneſs, ſo as to be ſtyled

SERM. XI. in Scripture (by way of eminence) *the* Friend *of God*, and the Father *of the Faithful*. Eccluſ. xliv. 19. *He was a great Father of many people; in glory was there none like unto him, who kept the law of the moſt High, and was in covenant with him.* Now *This* Righteouſneſs, which the Son of *Sirach* calls keeping *the Law of the moſt High*, the Apoſtle calls the righteouſneſs of *Faith*, in oppoſition to that of *Works*. By the *Works* therefore which he diſparages, 'tis plain he means *Rites and Ceremonies*, not the *Practiſe of Virtue*; and by *Believing in God*, which he ſo highly commends, he means *True Religion*. By adhering to this true Religion, *Abraham* made proof of his believing in God, which was counted to him for righteouſneſs; and *We*, if we *ſo* believe in God, ſhall have it imputed for righteouſneſs unto *Us* likewiſe.

Rom. iv. 16.

IN order therefore to make this obſervation of the Apoſtle uſeful to us in Practiſe, it may be proper to conſider diſtinctly, *1ſt*, wherein conſiſted that *Faith* of *Abraham*, which the Text ſays was counted to him for righteouſneſs; and *2dly*, *What* it is, that is particularly required

quired of *Us*, when *we* likewiſe are in Scripture commanded to *believe in God.* SERM. XI.

I. NOW the Account which the Scripture gives us of the *Faith* of *Abraham*, is this:

1*ſt*, IT conſiſted in his believing the *true* God, the Maker and Governour of the Univerſe, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. The Nations among whom he ſojourned, were all Idolaters; Worſhippers of dead men, worſhippers of the Kings who had reigned over them in their life-time: For *That* was the original of all the Heathen-Idolatry. Every City or Territory had its own Prince, and the World was divided into ſmall Kingdoms. Theſe Kings were honoured by their Flatterers, with Honours during their *Lives* too nearly divine; and after their *Deaths*, they were by the ignorant people worſhipped as Gods. The Worſhip paid to ſuch Gods of their own making, was accordingly ſuperſtitious; and the corruption of their *manners* was anſwerable to the abſurdity of their *religion*. From theſe, *Abraham* ſeparated himſelf, and believed in the true God the

SERM. XI.

Maker of all things; and for the ſake of that Belief, forſook his native country. *Heb.* xi. 8. *By Faith Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, and ſojourned in the land of Promiſe as in a ſtrange country; for he looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.* He believed that the God of the whole World, whom alone he worſhipped, was able to *preſerve* him in the preſent Life, or *reward* him in another that ſhould come; and This *Faith was counted unto him for righteouſneſs.* Some have *diſputed*, whether the Patriarchs under the old Teſtament had any expreſs knowledge of the Life to come. But that they *had*, the Apoſtle's Argument is a plain *demonſtration*, Heb. xi. 13. They who having *ſeen the promiſes afar off, confeſſed themſelves to be Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth, declare plainly that they ſeek a------better country*, ver. 16.

2*dly*, As *Abraham*'s Faith conſiſted *in general* in believing the *True God*, ſo *in particular* it manifeſted itſelf in ſuch *Acts* of Dependence upon him, as became a perſon who had *juſt and worthy Notions* of the True God whom he ſerved; And for

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This, it was counted unto Him for righteouſneſs. Thus St *Paul* expreſsly argues, in the caſe of *Abraham*'s receiving the promiſe of a Son, *Rom.* iv. 17. *Before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth thoſe things which be not, as though they were, He againſt Hope believed in Hope,*-----*giving glory to God, and being fully perſwaded, that what he had promiſed, he was able alſo to perform*; *and therefore* (ſaith he) *it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs.* Thus likewiſe in the caſe of offering up his *Son*, the excellency of his Faith conſiſted in This, that it was founded upon that Great Principle of Religion, the expectation of a Reſurrection from the dead. *He accounted*, ſaith St *Paul*, *that God was able to raiſe him up even from the dead, from whence alſo he received him in a Figure*, Heb. xi. 19. Theſe laſt words, *from whence alſo he received him in a Figure*, are by Expoſitors underſtood to ſignify, *Iſaac*'s near eſcape from Death, when he was juſt upon the point of being offered. But This being an Event not foreſeen by *Abraham* before it came to paſs, could not be to him an Argument SERM. XI.

SERM. XI.

at That Time, to confirm his Faith. And therefore I think the words will bear *another* ſenſe, much more pertinent to the Apoſtle's intention. *Abraham*, ſaith he, *accounted, that God was able to raiſe him up even from the Dead*; and he had the more reaſon ſo to account, becauſe he had already once before *received him* from the dead *in a figure*; namely, at the time of his *Birth*, when he ſprang from Parents *as good as dead*; as the ſame Apoſtle expreſſes in the very ſame chapter. *Abraham*'s Reaſoning was This; (and it was very pertinent and ſtrong;) The ſame God who could cauſe *Iſaac* to receive life at firſt from *Parents already dead through Age*, could as eaſily the ſecond time raiſe him to life again, when he *himſelf* ſhould be *dead*.

3*dly*, THE Faith of *Abraham* was not a Speculation or mere Credulity, but a Principle of Obedience and True Holineſs. *Gen.* xviii. 19. *I* know *Abraham, that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall* keep *the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has ſpoken of him.*

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SERM. XI.

These words of *God himself* in the Old Teſtament, are ſufficiently clear. But becauſe there aroſe afterwards ſome miſtakes about this matter; St *James*, in expreſs deciſion of a point of controverſy in *His* time, alleges the very ſame example: Ch. ii. 21. *Was not Abraham our Father juſtified by Works, when he offered Iſaac his Son upon the Altar? Seeſt thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect! And the Scripture was fulfilled which ſaith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteouſneſs.* 'Tis very remarkable that theſe laſt words, which in the Text are cited by St *Paul* for the magnifying the efficacy of *Faith*, are at the ſame time cited by St *James*, to ſhow the *equal* neceſſity of *Works of Righteouſneſs*. *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteouſneſs*. *Abraham* was juſtified by *believing* in God; but the Reaſon why his Faith was ſo highly accepted, was becauſe the *Effect* of it was Righteouſneſs of Life.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*; THE *Faith* of *Abraham* is oppoſed in Scripture, juſt as the Faith of Chriſtians is, not to the Works of

SERM. XI. of *Virtue*, but to the *Rites and Ceremonies* of the Law of *Moſes*. *Gal.* iii. 7. *They that are of Faith*, ſaith St *Paul*, that is, they who believing in Chriſt expect Salvation through the real Holineſs of the Goſpel, and not by ſuch outward Forms and Ceremonies as the *Jews* obſerved; *the ſame* (ſaith he) *are the children of Abraham*; ver. 6. *Even as* Abraham *believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs.* And *Rom.* iv. 13. *The Promiſe was not to Abraham or to his Seed through the Law, but through the righteouſneſs of Faith: ----- To the end the Promiſe might be ſure to* all *the Seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to That alſo which is of the Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all.* His meaning is: The Promiſes of God to *Abraham*, the Promiſe of giving him a better Country than that which he went out from; the Promiſe of being his God and his exceeding great Reward; the Promiſe of making him *Heir of the World*; (all which, the reaſon of the thing ſhows, and the Apoſtle in the eleventh to the *Hebrews* expreſsly declares, to be meant of the heavenly *Canaan*, the new *Jeruſalem*,

Rom. iv. 12.

ſalem, whereof the Land of Promiſe was but a Type and a Shadow;) Theſe Promiſes were made to *Abraham*, not as circumciſed, not as the Father of the Nation of the *Jews*; but as having *that* exemplary Faith, *that* firm Belief in the One True God the Maker of all things, *that* readineſs to obey him in oppoſition to the univerſal corruption of an idolatrous World, and *that* dependence upon God's being finally a Rewarder of them who diligently ſerve him without Any Proſpect of temporal Advantage; which made this great man to be deſervedly eſteemed the Father of all Faithful and Holy Men, who ſhould acceptably ſerve the ſame God, in all Ages and in all Nations of the World. SERM. XI.

THIS is the Account the Scripture gives us of that *Faith of Abraham*, which *was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs*. The right Underſtanding of which matter, removes at once all the Difficulties concerning the Notion of Faith and Works, which has occaſioned ſo many vain controverſies in the Chriſtian World; and at the ſame time may ſerve to inſtruct us, (which was the

II. *Second*

SERM. XI.

II. *Second* thing I propoſed to ſpeak to;) *what* it is, that is particularly required of *Us*, when *We* likewiſe are in Scripture commanded to *believe in God*. And this evidently implies,

1*ſt*, BELIEVING his *Being*: That is; not only, in a Speculative manner, believing that there *is* an infinitely Perfect Being, in the notional way wherein Philoſophers deſcribe him; which may eaſily be ſeparate from any religious Affection; but 'tis having upon our Minds a conſtant Senſe of his being, in the moral ſenſe, the Supreme Governour, and righteous Judge of the World. *This* Belief of the Being of God, is That only, which becauſe it will certainly produce the Fruits of Virtue, ſhall therefore certainly be accounted unto us for Righteouſneſs.

2*dly*, THE Duty of Believing in God implies, not only our believing his Being, and his being Governour and Judge of the World; but alſo that we have *worthy and honourable Apprehenſions* of his *Nature and Attributes*. For when any man thinks he believes in God, without attending at the ſame time to thoſe Perfections and Excellencies, which conſti-

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tute the true and real Notion of God, he deceives himſelf with that empty fallacy of putting *Words* for *Things*; and inſtead of placing his Religion in obeying the Commands of the True Governour of the Univerſe, by the practiſe of all Holineſs, Righteouſneſs, and Virtue; he will be apt to content himſelf with worſhipping he knows not *what*, and he knows not *how*, with a blind Superſtition, without Underſtanding, and without any real improvement in Goodneſs. This is naturally the Effect of aſcribing *Abſurdities* to God, as thoſe of the Church of *Rome* do in the matter of *Tranſubſtantiation*; or of teaching things concerning him contrary to the common and obvious Notions of *Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs*, as thoſe have done, who contend for the Doctrine of abſolute and unconditionate *Predeſtination*. The Religion of ſuch men uſually conſiſts more in an uſeleſs amazement of Mind, than in any real Practiſe of Virtue: Than which, nothing can be more diſhonourable to God, or more injurious to Religion. For if a wiſe and good *man* had rather his Name ſhould not be mentioned

SERM. XI.

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SERM. XI. at all, than that there ſhould be joined with it a Character contrary to Wiſdom and Goodneſs; much more muſt it needs be unacceptable to God, that men ſhould *frame* of him ſuch Notions as are not honourable to *Him*; and *ſerve* him with ſuch a Religion, as is of no True Benefit to *Them*. God governs the *natural* World with abſolute Power and Wiſdom; and the *moral* World with perfect Righteouſneſs, Juſtice, and Goodneſs. In the imitation and practiſe of theſe Virtues conſiſts the true Eſſence of Religion towards *men*; and in the acknowledgment of, and dependence upon, theſe Perfections of the Divine Nature, conſiſts True Faith towards *God*. Herein conſiſted the Faith of *Abraham*; that, in the midſt of an idolatrous World, he conſtantly retained this Notion of the One inviſible God of the whole Univerſe; and truſted in him, and ſerved him, and obeyed him accordingly, in all Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of Life; depending upon a remote and inviſible Reward; and therefore he was ſtyled, the *Friend* of God, and was ſet forth as a perpetual Example of True Faith to all ſucceeding generations. Look

at the generations of old, ſaith the Son of Sirach, *and ſee; did ever any truſt in the Lord, and was confounded? or, did any abide in his fear, and was forſaken? or whom did he ever deſpiſe, that called upon him?* SERM. XI.

3*dly*, BELIEVING in God, ſignifies believing his *Revelations* alſo, as well as what *Nature* teaches concerning Him. The Obligations of *revealed* Religion are founded upon the ſame ground, as the obligations of *natural* Religion; and they mutually ſtrengthen and confirm each other. By the dictates of *Nature* it was reaſonable to expect that God would vouchſafe to make more clear to men his Will by *Revelation*; and in all true *Revelation* is contained a fuller enforcement and more ſtrong confirmation of the Law of *Nature*. Men therefore who in Chriſtian countries, where the Goſpel is preached, pretend to believe in the *God of Nature*, and yet at the ſame time reject the revelation of the *Goſpel*, which is ſo *agreeable to* and *perfective of* the Law of Nature; do, generally ſpeaking, in *pretenſe* only, and not in *reality*, ſhow any more regard to *natural* than

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SERM. XI. to *revealed* Religion; falling for the moſt part into abſolute Atheiſm. Whereas they who ſeriouſly believe, and practiſe the Duties of *natural* Religion, are generally diſpoſed to embrace alſo conſequently the *Revelation* of the *Goſpel*. Thoſe whom *the Father*, the God of *Nature*, draweth, come eaſily to *Chriſt*, who is the Author of the Goſpel. The only thing neceſſary here to be obſerved, is, that for preventing with due care the *Frauds* and Impoſitions of men, who have ſometimes attempted (as particularly in many Inſtances in the Church of *Rome*) to impoſe their own Inventions inſtead of Divine Revelation; diligent inquiry ought always to be made into the *evidence* of the *Facts*, and into the *nature and reaſon* of the *thing*. For a doctrine, even not unreaſonable in itſelf, yet is not to be admitted as a Divine Revelation without good evidence of the *Fact*: Neither on the contrary can any pretenſe of evidence of Fact, be ſufficient for the admiſſion of a Doctrine *impoſſible or abſurd in itſelf*. Tranſubſtantiation has no evidence of being revealed: But had there been never ſo great an appearance

of Evidence for it, yet it could not be received, becauſe the manifeſt *Abſurdity of the thing*, would always be a ſtronger Argument *againſt* its being an Object of Faith, than any other Evidence could be *for* it. Every Revelation, *muſt* be agreeable to the *Nature of God*, and to the *poſſibility of things*. Our Saviour himſelf alleges it as an Argument, for the Proof of the Truth even of his *Miracles* themſelves; that his Doctrine was directly contrary to the Power and Intereſt of evil Spirits, and tended in its own Nature to the Glory of God, and to the Benefit of Men: Otherwiſe the Objection of the Phariſees would have been of ſome force, that he caſt out Devils by the Prince of the Devils. In the *Old Teſtament*, the greateſt Difficulty of This kind, is the Inſtance of *Abraham* offering up his Son; which if it was a thing unalterably evil in itſelf, it may be objected could never be a Revelation from God. For the clearing of which it is therefore to be obſerved, that of things Evil or Immoral there are three ſorts. Some things are Evil, only becauſe prohibited by a poſitive Law; and theſe it is evident are SERM. XI.

SERM. XI.

no longer evil, than the Law which forbids them continues in Being. Other things are Evil unalterably in their own Nature; even ſo as that it would be a direct contradiction and abſolute impoſſibility, to ſuppoſe that God ſhould at *any time* whatſoever, or upon *any occaſion*, command them: Such are *Hatred of God and Goodneſs*, the *worſhip of Falſe Gods*, a *malicious or cruel Temper of Mind*; and the like. Now between theſe two ſorts of Evils there is a third; which is not only evil, becauſe contrary to any poſitive Law, but contrary alſo even to the Law of Nature itſelf: Yet *not ſo unalterably*, but that in ſome particular circumſtances, when expreſsly commanded by the God of Nature, it *may* ceaſe to be contrary to that Law. And of this kind, is the taking away the Life of an innocent man; as in the caſe of *Abraham* and his Son. Which though contrary to the Law of Nature, to be done by the Will of Man, or of any Power on Earth; yet may without any inconſiſtency be in a particular caſe commanded by God: Becauſe God who *gave* life, may *take it away* when he pleaſes, either by

a natural Diſeaſe, or by any other In- SERM. XI.
ſtrument which he thinks fit. Only he who in ſuch a caſe ſhall pretend to be an Inſtrument in the hand of God, muſt ſhow a Commiſſion or Revelation as *clear* as was That to *Abraham:* Otherwiſe all Impiety and Superſtition may be brought in the place of Religion; as thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, under pretenſe of doing ſervice to God, are perpetually deſtroying the beſt of his Servants.

4thly and *Laſtly*; As believing in God, ſignifies believing his *Revelations*, as well as his *Nature and Attributes*; ſo it always includes *Obedience* to him likewiſe, when it means That Faith which ſhall be counted to us for Righteouſneſs. *Abraham's Faith*, ſaith St *James*, *wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect.* And concerning *Ours* in like manner St *Paul* declares, *Rom.* x. 10. *With the Heart man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth confeſſion is made unto Salvation.*

SERMON XII.

Of the GRACE *of* GOD.

TIT. ii. 11, 12.

For the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men: Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World.

IN the *Firſt* Chapter of This Epiſtle, the Apoſtle inſtructs *Titus* in the particulars of his *own* Duty; exhorting him to be diligent in *ſtudying*, ſtedfaſt in *holding faſt*, painful in *teaching*, and, above all things, exemplary in *practiſing*

SERM. XII. *practiſing* the Chriſtian Doctrine. In the *ſecond* chapter, he directs him what inſtructions he ſhould give to *Others*; to perſons in every circumſtance of Age, and in every Station of Life; That men of all Ranks and Conditions whatſoever, of all degrees and of all capacities, might know how, by a ſuitable Behaviour, to *adorn in all things the Doctrine of* God our Saviour; whoſe *kindneſs and Love* has been *ſhed on us abundantly, through* Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour, *ch.* iii. 6. The Apoſtle, I ſay, having in *This*, and in the *foregoing* chapter, inſtructed both *Titus himſelf*, and thoſe who were *under his charge*, in the Great *Branches* of *Moral Duty*; he proceeds in the words of the Text to *inforce* the *Practiſe* of thoſe Duties by this *emphatical Argument*; that the very *End* and *Deſign* of the *Goſpel of Chriſt* was to *teach* men the neceſſity of ſuch Practiſe: To *teach* them, that *denying ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts*, they *ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World*; *Looking for that Bleſſed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; *Who gave himſelf for us*, that

that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good Works. SERM. XII.

SOBRIETY, Righteouſneſs, and Godlineſs, are the *Ends* for the promoting whereof, Chriſt came into the World. Whatever therefore in Any Profeſſion of Religion *tends not* to *promote* theſe Ends, is *uſeleſs and deceitful:* Whatever tends in any degree to *fruſtrate* them, is *pernicious* and *deſtructive.* By This Rule, may eaſily be tried the real and intrinſick *Value* of every *doctrine*; by This, may be weighed the degree of *dangerouſneſs* of every *Errour*, in Religion. Every Notion and Speculation whatſoever, every Form and Ceremony of Any Kind, every external Rite, every inward Opinion, concerning *Faith*, or *Grace*, or the *Merits of Chriſt*, or *any other* Doctrine whatever it be: So far as it leads and influences Men to be more truly *virtuous* and *good*, to have a more conſtant Senſe of *God* upon their Minds, to be more *ſober and temperate*, to have a more ſtrict Regard to *Truth*, *Juſtice*, *Equity* and *Charity*, in the whole Courſe of their Actions; ſo far it makes them *better Chriſti-*

SERM. XII.

ans. But if, on the contrary, any of theſe be things (as they too frequently are, among *All* Profeſſions of Men; If they be) at any time looked upon as *Equivalents*, to be accepted of God in the *room* and in the *ſtead* of true Virtue; they are Then really deſtructive of all Religion. For *whoſoever* (ſays our Lord) *ſhall break one of theſe Leaſt Commandmandments*, (ſpeaking of the *eternal Duties* of the *Moral* Law,) *and ſhall teach men ſo*, (that is, ſhall upon Any pretenſe whatſoever teach men to look upon Other things as of more importance than theſe;) *he ſhall be called the Leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, he ſhall of all men be the fartheſt from ever entring therein. The *Reaſon* why Chriſt *gave himſelf for us*, was, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto Himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good Works.* The *Cauſe*, for which was revealed *that Bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, was, that it might be an effectual *Support* to men in the *Practiſe of Virtue*, under the various Temptations of a vitious and unrighteous World. The *End*

Matt. v. 19.

and

and Deſign, for which God's *graciouſneſs* towards men in the *Forgiveneſs of Sins*, was declared in the Goſpel; was to *teach* us the *neceſſity* of *Obedience* for the future, and to *incourage* us in our *ſincere Endeavours* after it. *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men; Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World.* SERM. XII.

In the following Diſcourſe upon Theſe Words, I ſhall 1*ſt* explain *What* is meant by *the Grace of God.* And 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider, *How* This *Grace of God* Teaches *us*; teaches us in a *peculiar* and *emphatical* manner; that, *Denying Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World.*

I. In the *Firſt* place, the *proper* Signification of the word *Grace*, is *Favour*: *Favour* in *ſuch* a ſenſe, as denotes *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* in a *Superiour*, either *remitting* ſomewhat of his *Own Right*, or *conferring* ſomewhat Beneficial upon *Others*; freely, and without Any obligation

SERM. XII.

on of Debt. And becauſe *This* may be done after *various manners*, and in a great *diverſity* of *Inſtances*; hence the word *Grace* in Scripture, is accordingly applied, in a *proportionable diverſity* of *Significations.*

SOMETIMES it ſignifies thoſe *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* of the Holy Ghoſt, by which the Apoſtles were inabled to *demonſtrate* the *Truth* of their *Commiſſion*, to *preach* their *Doctrine* with *Authority*, to *convince Gainſayers* with *Evidence*, to *govern the Churches* by a proper diſtribution of different *Truſts and Offices.* And the *Gifts* or *Powers*, by which the Apoſtles were inabled to do all theſe things with extraordinary Efficacy and Succeſs, are *Therefore* called *Grace*, becauſe they are not at all *Natural Acquiſitions*, but *Free Gifts of God*; diſtributed to every one ſeverally, not according to the Will of *Man*; but *at* ſuch *times*, and *in* ſuch *proportions*, and *to* ſuch *Perſons*, and *for* ſuch *Purpoſes*, as *God himſelf* pleaſed. Thus *Rom.* i. 5. *By whom we have received* Grace *and* Apoſtleſhip, *for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations.* That is; Who has *graciouſly* been pleaſed

to

SERM. XII.

to *ſend forth* Us the Apoſtles, to preach with mighty Works and Demonſtration of the Spirit, in order to bring back the Nations to the Knowledge of God and to the Practiſe of Virtue, by the Arguments and Motives of the Goſpel of Chriſt. In like manner, *ch.* xii. 6. *Having then* Gifts, *differing according to the* Grace *that is given to us*, (that is, according to the good pleaſure of God in diſtributing thoſe Gifts;) *whether it be prophecy, let us propheſy*, (or whatever Gift it be, let us imploy it diligently,) *according to the proportion of Faith*, i. e. according to the Nature and Uſe of the Gift or Power or *Truſt* committed to our Charge or *Fidelity*: So the word *Faith* evidently ſignifies in This place; and above, in ver. 3. *according as God has dealt to every man the Meaſure of* Faith, i. e. according to the nature and degree of the Power committed to every man's *Truſt* or *Faithfulneſs*. Had *This* ſignification of the word been generally attended to, which is manifeſtly the Apoſtle's true meaning; it might have prevented abundance of weak and unintelligible things, which have ſometimes been ſpoken concerning *God's giving* men *Faith*,

SERM. XII.

Faith, and the like. But This, by the way. Another remarkable Paſſage of the ſame Apoſtle, where the word *Grace* plainly ſignifies again the *extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit*, is in *Eph.* iv. 7, 11. *Unto every one of us is given* Grace, *according to the Meaſure of the Gift of Chriſt*:----*And he gave Some Apoſtles, and Some Prophets, and Some Evangeliſts, and Some Paſtors and Teachers.* This therefore is the *Firſt* Senſe, wherein the word *Grace* is frequently uſed in the *New Teſtament*: It denotes the *extraordinary Powers* wherewith God was *graciouſly* pleaſed to indue the Apoſtles, in order to inable them to propagate the Goſpel with Authority and Succeſs.

IN *Other* Paſſages, the ſame word is made uſe of to ſignify That extraordinary *Aſſiſtance and Support*, which God has ſometimes been pleaſed to afford his Servants, under extraordinary *Difficulties and Trials*. And *This* is called *Grace*, becauſe conſidered as given *particularly* upon *extraordinary* occaſions, over and above the *general Supports*, ariſing from the Conſiderations of *Reaſon*, and from the *Motives and Promiſes of the Goſpel* in

general. Thus when St *Paul* under ſome *particular* Affliction and Diſtreſs, which he calls *The Meſſenger of Satan to buffet* him, prayed with repeated importunity to have this Trouble removed from him; The Lord ſaid unto him, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9. *My* Grace *is ſufficient for thee.* And when our Saviour foretells his diſciples, that they ſhould be *perſecuted* and *brought before Kings and Rulers for* His *name's ſake*; he tells them at the ſame time, which is another Inſtance of This *Grace* or *Gracious Goodneſs* of *God*, which *will not ſuffer* men *to be tempted above what* they *are able*; He tells them they need not be ſollicitous, *what Anſwer* to make; For *the Holy Ghoſt* ſhould *teach them* in *That Hour*, and *He himſelf* would *give* them *a Mouth and Wiſdom, which All their Adverſaries* ſhould *not be able to gainſay or reſiſt*; Luke xii. 11; and xxi. 14.

A *Third* ſenſe, wherein the word *Grace* is ſometimes made uſe of in the *New Teſtament*, is to expreſs ſuch *Moral Virtues*, as are the *Effects* of men's being influenced, by the *Spiritual Motives of the Goſpel*; and the *Practice* of which, preſerves men in the *Favour* of God, and recom-

SERM. XII. recommends them to his *Gracious Acceptance.* Thus *Eph.* iv. 29. *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Uſe of edifying; that it may miniſter* Grace *unto the Hearers*; That is, that it may promote the Practiſe of *Virtue* in the World. And, 2 *Pet*, iii. 18. *Grow in* Grace; That is, improve more and more in all *virtuous* Behaviour, which may render you *Acceptable* in the *Sight of God.* After the ſame manner of ſpeaking, the Apoſtle St *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* viii. 1, ſtiles the extraordinary *liberality* of the *Macedonian Churches* to the Poor, *the* Grace *of God beſtowed on them.* And his direction to *Titus*, to *perſwade* the *Corinthians* to *imitate* that exemplary liberality, he *thus* expreſſes, *ver.* 6. *We deſired Titus, that, as he had begun, ſo he would alſo finiſh in* you *the ſame* Grace *alſo.* And then he adds his *Own* exhortation, ſtill in the *very ſame* Style, *ver.* 7. *Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in Faith, in Utterance, and Knowledge, and in all Diligence, and in your Love to Us; ſee that ye abound in* This Grace *alſo*, the Grace of Liberality and Charity. In theſe Paſſages, 'tis

as

as evident as poſſible, that the word *Grace* denotes the *very ſame*, as *Chriſtian* or *Moral Virtue*. And *Moral Virtues* are plainly *for This reaſon* called by the name of *Grace*, becauſe they *proceed from* and are *founded in* a *Regard to God* in *general*, and in *particular* to *his Will revealed under the Gracious Diſpenſation of the Goſpel of Chriſt*. They are the *Effects* of men's *Converſion to God*; the *Effects* of all the *external* and *internal Influences* of the Goſpel; the *Fruits of the Spirit*. And not only in the Language of *Scripture*, in the *Apoſtles* times; but even at *This day*, in *common Speech*, the word *(Grace) ſtill retains* in many Caſes the *ſame* Signification. Thus when *abandoned* and *debauched* perſons are vulgarly ſtiled *Graceleſs*; the Intent of That denomination never is to *excuſe*, but always to *aggravate* the Fault of the perſons ſo ſtiled. It never means any Defect on *God*'s part, as if *He* afforded them not the *Capacities* of Religion and Virtue; but always on *their own* part only, that All the Means and Aſſiſtances of Religion are beſtowed on them *in vain*, and *have not Influence* ſufficient to *reform* them.

To

SERM. XII.

To proceed: *Another* Signification of the word *Grace* in Scripture, is to expreſs that *merciful Acceptance* of *Repentance and Amendment*, whereby *God* is pleaſed, not out of any *obligation of Juſtice*, but in *gracious Goodneſs*, to reſtore men to his Favour. In *This* ſenſe, St *Paul* ſays of *Himſelf*, *I am not meet to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the Church of God: But by the* Grace *of God*, (that is, by his *gracious Acceptance* of my ſincere Intentions,) *I am what I am*. In like manner, when the *Doctrine of* Chriſt, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Law of* Moſes, is by the Evangeliſt ſtyled Grace *and Truth*; and when the *Apoſtles Preaching*, is by St *Luke* called *The Word* (or Declaration) *of God's* Grace; and when St *Paul* declares, that repenting Sinners *are juſtified freely by his* Grace; and blames thoſe, as the moſt *pernicious Perverters* of his Doctrine, who think they may *continue in Sin, that* Grace *may abound*: 'Tis evident the word *Grace*, in all theſe Paſſages, ſignifies That *merciful* and *compaſſionate* diſpoſition of the Divine Nature, whereby God freely *remits* of his *Right of Puniſhment*; and receives penitent

1 Cor. xv. 9.

Joh. i. 17.

Acts xiv. 3.

Rom. iii. 24.

Rom. vi. 1.

tent Sinners upon *more gracious Terms*, and to *greater degrees of his Favour*, than he was bound to do by *any obligation* of *Juſtice*. SERM. XII.

AND *hence* it is, that, in the *Laſt* place, the *Goſpel itſelf*, as being the *Great* and *Standing* Declaration of God's *Mercy and Goodneſs* towards men, ſhown forth in the *free Pardon and Forgiveneſs* of Sin, upon the *gracious Terms* of Repentance and Amendment; hence the *Goſpel itſelf*, I ſay, is in the *New Teſtament* very frequently meant by This Phraſe, *the Grace of God*. Thus *Col.* i. 6. *Since the day ye heard of it, and knew* the Grace of God *in Truth*: That is, from the Time ye were inſtructed in the *Doctrine of the Goſpel*. And 2 *Theſ.* ii. 16. *Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, and God even our Father, ---- hath given us ---- good Hope through* Grace; that is, through the *gracious Promiſes of the Goſpel*. Again; 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Thou therefore, my Son, be ſtrong in the* Grace *that is in Chriſt Jeſus*, (that is, Be Faithful and Diligent, in preaching the Goſpel;) *And the things that thou haſt heard of Me, ---- the ſame commit thou to Faithful men, who ſhall be*

SERM. XII.

able to teach Others alſo. In like manner; *the Prophets*-----*prophecying of the* Grace *that ſhould come*, is, their foretelling the Revelation of *the Goſpel.* And Some among the *Galatians*, *falling from* Grace; means their rejecting the Privileges of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, when they claimed to be *juſtified by* their obſerving the Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh Law.* To give but one Inſtance more: The Queſtion St *Paul* puts, *Rom.* vi. 15. *Shall we ſin, becauſe we are not under the Law, but under* Grace? is, in ſenſe, plainly This: Shall the *Mercy*, the *Compaſſion and gracious Goodneſs* of God, declared in the *Goſpel* much more expreſsly than under the *Moſaick Law*; ſhall it be an incouragement to us to continue in Sin? God forbid. And Thus therefore likewiſe in the words of the Text: *The* Grace *of God*, that is, the *gracious Doctrine of the* Goſpel, has been declared *to all men*; *Teaching us, that Denying Ungodlineſs*, and ſo on. The Apoſtle here very *expreſsly* explains his own words. He is not ſpeaking of *That Grace* of God, which *operates in* or *upon* men; but of *That Grace* which Teaches them, that *Denying Ungodlineſs*

1 Pet. i. 10.

Gal. v. 4.

godlineſs and Worldly Luſts, they *ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* SERM. XII.

The *Additional* words, *(which bringeth Salvation,)* are, in the Original, of ambiguous conſtruction; and may equally ſignify, either, as we render them, *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath* appeared *to* all *men*; or, *The Grace of God hath appeared, bringing* Salvation *unto* all *men*. If we underſtand them in the *former* ſenſe, *(The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath* appeared *to* all *men*;) they are *Then* of the ſame import with thoſe *other* expreſſions, Rom. x. 18. *Their Sound is gone forth into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World*; and *Col.* i. 23. *The Hope of the Goſpel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under Heaven.* If they are underſtood in the Latter ſenſe; *(The Grace of God hath appeared, bringing* Salvation *unto* all *men*;) the meaning of them *Then* is the ſame, as in the *following* Expreſſions of Scripture; that Chriſt *has aboliſhed Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Goſpel*; that God *will*

SERM. XII.

have All men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth; being *not willing that Any ſhould periſh, but that All ſhould come to Repentance.* In whichſoever of *theſe two ſenſes* the words of the Text be taken; the *Meaning* of them, upon the whole, amounts to the *Same*; that the Deſign of God in the gracious Declarations of the Goſpel, is to bring *all men*, by the Promiſe of Pardon, to Repentance and Amendment *here*, and thereby to eternal Salvation *hereafter*. The *Senſe* of the Propoſition is *plain*: The only *difficulty* here, is that which ariſes, and indeed very obviouſly, from comparing the *actual Event* of things, with the *Declarations* of God's gracious *Intention and Deſign*. If God *deſigned* by the gracious Terms of the Goſpel, to bring *all men* to Salvation; how comes the *Extent* of it to be confined within ſo *narrow* a Compaſs, and the *Effect* of it to be in experience ſo inconſiderable, even where in Profeſſion it ſeems to have univerſally prevailed? The *Anſwer* to This is; that in all *moral* matters, the *Intention* or *Deſign* of God, *never* ſignifies (as it does *Always* in *Natural* things) an

Intention

SERM. XII.

Intention of *the Event*, *actually* and *neceſſarily* to be accompliſhed; but (which *Alone* is *conſiſtent* with the *nature* of *Moral* things,) an *Intention* of all the *Means*, neceſſary on *His* part, to the putting That Event into the Power of the proper and immediate Agents. For inſtance: With *intention* that *all men* ſhould act *reaſonably*, God indues them with the *Faculty* of *natural Reaſon*. The *Event*, whether after This they will *act reaſonably* or no, *muſt* depend upon *their own* Choice and Care: Becauſe *the very Faculty* or *Power* of acting *reaſonably*, does *neceſſarily and eſſentially* include in it a *Power* of acting likewiſe *unreaſonably*. The caſe is the *very ſame*, with reſpect to the Method of bringing men to Salvation by the *Goſpel*. God has commanded the Goſpel to be preached to the *whole World*. The merciful *Conditions*, and the gracious *Means and Aſſiſtances* of the Goſpel, are *ſufficient* to bring *all men* to Salvation; except ſuch as either wilfully *reject* it, when fairly and reaſonably propoſed to them; or who *profeſſing* to *embrace* it, yet *obey* it *not*. For, as for Thoſe to whom it was either

SERM. XII.

never *at all*, or (which is much the ſame thing,) never *reaſonably* preached, their caſe is exactly the ſame with regard to the *Goſpel*, as the caſe of *ſuch others* is with regard to *Natural Reaſon*, who either totally or in great meaſure want That natural Faculty. Every man ſhall be *accepted according to what he* Hath, *and not according to what he* hath not, 2 *Cor.* viii. 12. God therefore *willeth all men to be ſaved*; (juſt in the ſame manner as he willeth all men to act rationally:) And yet This does not hinder them from *deſtroying themſelves* by wilfully *rejecting* That Salvation. For tho' *the Grace of God has* indeed *appeared to all men*, and is *ſufficient* alſo to *bring all men to Salvation*; yet it effects This not otherwiſe than by *Teaching them*, as the Apoſtle *proceeds* in the Text, (which is the *Second Particular* I propoſed to conſider;) *teaching them*, in a *peculiar* and *emphatical* manner, *that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World.*

II. Now

SERM. XII.

II. Now *How* the Goſpel does This, is not a point which needs much *inlargement*. 'Tis what our Saviour and his Apoſtles inculcate in the *whole New Teſtament*, from the One End to the Other. The *Practiſe of Virtue*, or *Living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly*; is the *End* and *Deſign* of all Religion. God is Himſelf a Being of infinite *Holineſs* and *Goodneſs*; and by no other way than by *imitating* theſe Perfections, can Any Creature become acceptable in his Sight. By the Light of *Nature and Reaſon* therefore, men are bound to the Practiſe of theſe Virtues. But becauſe their very *Beſt* Performances are always *defective*; and Thoſe who have *tranſgreſſed* in any plain Inſtances, ſtand in need of particular *Pardon*; and Methods of mens *own* Invention to appeaſe the Anger of God, had continually introduced numberleſs vain and deluſive *Superſtitions*; therefore, in compaſſion to the Weakneſs of Mankind, and to cure theſe Great Evils, God was pleaſed to ſend them an Inſtructor from Heaven, to *teach* them in a *more effectual* manner, than any ever *before*

SERM. XII. diſcovered, how that *denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World.* The Goſpel, I ſay, teaches us *This*, in a method *more effectual*, than *Any* foregoing: *By* giving, even to the *Meaneſt* Capacities, the plaineſt and fulleſt, the perfecteſt and moſt diſtinct Account, of the Excellency and Extent of *Moral Virtue*; as in our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount. *By* giving, even to perſons of the *Loweſt* Abilities, clearer Inſtructions concerning the *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, than were uſually attained even by the moſt *Learned Philoſophers* amidſt the dark Superſtitions of the *Pagan* World. *By* ſhowing to all men, that God is a Being *of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity*; So far *hating Wickedneſs*, as that he did not think fit to pardon Sin without ſo great a Teſtimony againſt it as the Death of his Son; And yet, at the ſame time, of ſuch eſſential *Mercy and Goodneſs*, that he would rather give his own Son a Ranſom for Sinners, than not find a method of pardoning them, conſiſtent with the Wiſdom

dom of his infinite and eternal Govern- SERM. XII.
ment. *By* giving us conſequently the *Example* of *Chriſt*, in his Life, and in his Sufferings; the *Aſſiſtances* of his *Spirit*; the Aſſurance of a *Reward for Virtue*, in a happy immortality; and a more expreſs declaration of his *Wrath from Heaven, againſt all Unrighteouſneſs and Ungodlineſs of men.* By *Theſe Means* does the Goſpel in the moſt effectual manner *Teach us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* And to *Them* who are thus taught by it, and to *Them only*, it is *the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation.* 'Tis unto *Them*, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it, *the Savour of Life unto Life*; but unto the Wicked, *the Savour of Death unto Death.*

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

Of the GRACE *of* GOD.

PHIL. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th verſe.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.

THERE is no one Queſtion in the whole Syſtem of Divinity, which has raiſed greater Controverſies in the Church of God, than That concerning the Extent of the *Grace* of *God*

SERM. XIII.

God and the *Power* of *Man*. *Some*, in order to vindicate God from being the Author of Sin, have been ſo ſollicitous to maintain the perfect Freedom of *Men's* Faculties, and their Liberty of chooſing Good or Evil; that they either *have*, or have been thought *to have*, diminiſhed from the abſoluteneſs of the Sovereignty, or from the Efficacy of the Grace of *God*. They have been *thought*, I ſay, to diminiſh from the Grace of God. For whether they have *really* done ſo, or only by their Adverſaries been *repreſented* as doing ſo; is not very evident. In almoſt *all* Controverſies, what Men *ſay* for *Themſelves*, and what their *Adverſaries* infer or *repreſent* them as ſaying, are generally two very different things: And they who will not be at the pains to conſider diſtinctly what *each* ſide alledges for *itſelf*, but will judge of *Either* by the character or repreſentation made of it by the *Other* only; will for ever be led into erroneous judgments concerning Men and Things, and continue unavoidably ignorant of the True State of the Matter in Queſtion, whatſoever it be. Whether therefore

therefore They who in Antient Times were repreſented as *Deniers* of the *Grace* of *God*, were rightly charged with ſo doing or no, does not certainly appear; becauſe the *Ground* of that charge, was only their aſſerting the *Freedom of the Will* of *Man*; which though their *Adverſaries* judged to infer a Denial of the Sufficiency of the Power or Grace of God, yet perhaps *They Themſelves* ſaw no ſuch conſequence of it. However That be; *Others*, in the contrary Extreme, that they might be ſure not to aſcribe too little to the Efficacy of the Divine Grace, have ſuppoſed men to have *no natural Powers at all* of Acting or Willing, *no Uſe* of the original Faculties given them at their Creation, *no Liberty of Will* or Freedom of Choice, in matters of Morality and Religion. By which Doctrine they have *conſequently*, (even themſelves *ſeeing* and *acknowledging* the conſequence,) introduced an abſolute *Neceſſity* or *Fatality* upon Men's Actions. From whence it follows, in the next ſtep of deduction, (though This indeed they are not ſo willing to ſee;) but in Truth it *does* neceſſarily and unavoidably

SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII.

unavoidably follow; that *God himſelf*, and not *Man*, will be the Author of Sin.

SOMETHING not unlike to This, has happened in *another* Queſtion concerning the *Liberty* of the Will of *Man*, and the *Preſcience* or *Foreknowledge* of *God*. *Some*, conſidering that without Liberty of the Will, there can be no Religion, no Virtue or Vice, no juſt Puniſhment or reaſonable Reward; have, in order to remove an Objection which they judged would otherwiſe lie hard againſt ſo important a Truth, *denied* or ſeemed *to deny* God's foreknowledge of future and free Events. *Others* on the contrary, intent upon magnifying the Glory of the Divine Attributes, and ſollicitous to ſecure the including all poſſible future Events within the Compaſs of God's Foreknowledge, have affirmed all the Actions of Men to be Neceſſary and Determined abſolutely, by a Chain of certain and unalterable Cauſes. The Conſequence of which unavoidably is, that Man in reality is no more capable of Morality or Religion,

Religion, than a Beaſt that periſhes, or than a lifeleſs Machine. SERM. XIII.

THE *Truth*, in *Both* theſe controverſies, is; that there is Something in *Each* part of the Queſtion, which muſt needs be acknowledged to be True; and yet 'tis equally neceſſary that it *be always ſo only* acknowledged, and *ſo only* underſtood, as to be conſiſtent with what on the *Other* part of the Queſtion muſt at the ſame Time, and for the ſame Reaſons, of Neceſſity be acknowledged too. For otherwiſe, we do but indeavour to eſtabliſh *One* Truth, at the Expenſe of *Another*; which, at the concluſion of the Argument, is not indeed confirming *Either* of them, but deſtroying *Both*. Thus, for inſtance, the *Freedom of Men's Will*, whatever be the Nature and the Degree of that Freedom, muſt upon no account be any thing in any wiſe inconſiſtent with any of the *Perfections of God*; becauſe the Attributes of the Divine Nature are *Neceſſary* in themſelves, abſolutely and unalterably, and antecedent to the Production of all created Beings. And on the other ſide, *no Attribute of the Divine Nature*,

SERM. XIII. such as *Foreknowledge* in particular, can poſſibly be ſuch as to take away the *Liberty of the Will of Man*; becauſe then it would conſequently deſtroy ſome of the Other equally neceſſary Perfections of God, ſuch as Juſtice and Goodneſs which cannot poſſibly be deſtroyed. Since therefore neither the *Foreknowledge* of *God*, nor the *Liberty* of *Man*, can without a plain contradiction be denied; it follows unavoidably, that the *Foreknowledge* of *God* muſt be *of ſuch a Nature*, as is not inconſiſtent with the *Liberty* of *Man*. That is to ſay; it cannot be a Knowledge of the ſame ſort or Species, as is the Knowledge of neceſſary and determined Events, ariſing from a View of the whole Chain or Series of Neceſſary Cauſes producing thoſe Events: but it muſt be a Knowledge, quite of another Nature; a Power, difficult indeed for Us to frame a *clear* conception of, but yet not impoſſible to have a Notion of in general. For as a *Man* who has no influence over Another perſon's Actions, can yet often perceive beforehand what That Other will do; and a *wiſer* and more experienced

perienced Man, will ſtill with greater *probability* foreſee what Another, whoſe Diſpoſition he is perfectly acquainted with, will in certain Circumſtances do; and an *Angel*, with ſtill much leſs *degrees of Errour*, may have a farther Proſpect into Men's future Actions: ſo 'tis very reaſonable to apprehend, that *God*, without influencing Men's Wills by his Power, yet by his Foreſight cannot but have as much *Certainer* a Knowledge of future Free Events, than either Men or Angels can poſſibly have, as the *Perfection* of *His* nature is greater than that of *Theirs*. SERM. XIII.

In like manner, in that *Other* queſtion, which is the Subject-matter of my Text: Whatever Power Men be ſuppoſed to have in the Uſe of their *natural Faculties*, 'tis evident it cannot be ſuch as in any wiſe to diminiſh the Senſe they ought to have of their continual *Dependance* upon *God*; becauſe thoſe *very* Powers and *natural* Faculties, are *themſelves* entirely the Gift of God, and not any thing at all of *our own* procuring, *as of our ſelves*. So that thoſe who have been

SERM. XIII.

charged with aſcribing *the moſt* to the Power of Men's own Wills, did not perhaps (as their *Adverſaries* conceived) *intend* to derogate any thing from Men's true Dependance upon God: For it cannot be imagined that any reaſonable Men ſhould contend, (neither did their Argument require it,) that any One ſhould in any Action, or in any Degree, be Independent on his Maker. On the other ſide; whatever be ſuppoſed to be the Power and Efficacy of the *Grace* of *God*, even where it has the moſt *effectual* Influence; yet it muſt upon no account be underſtood to be ſuch as to over-rule the Liberty of Men's Will and Choice, and render their Actions *neceſſary*; becauſe This would be to remove the whole Foundation of Religion, by entirely deſtroying the Morality of Men's Actions, and taking away the very Nature of Virtue and Vice. Since therefore neither the Influence of the *Divine Grace*, nor the proper *Power of Men* in the uſe of their *natural* Faculties, can without an evident contradiction be denied; it follows unavoidably, that the

Grace

SERM. XIII.

Grace of God muſt of neceſſity always be underſtood, to have the nature of a *moral Aſſiſtance only*, which does perfectly agree with Men's *Free uſe of their Faculties*; and that it is *not* in the nature of a *phyſical compulſion*, which is altogether inconſiſtent with Men's doing any thing *themſelves*. The Apoſtle perfectly expreſſes this whole Notion, in the Words of the Text: *Work out* your own *Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; *for it is* God *that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure*. He does not ſay, *Work out your own Salvation* yourſelves, *as having* no Need *of the Grace of God*: Neither does he ſay on the contrary, *The Grace of God worketh* All *in you, and therefore ye need not to do any thing* yourſelves: But, aſcribing to each part its proper Office, he ſays, *Work* ye *out your own Salvation, becauſe* the Grace of God (the Motives and Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel) *gives you Power ſo to do*.

THE principal Argument alleged by Thoſe, who think the Influence of the Divine Grace to be *ſo* efficacious as to *neceſſitate*

SERM. XIII.

ceſſitate Men's Actions, is, that it ſeems to Them *unworthy* of the Supreme Power, Sovereignty and Majeſty of God to do any thing *ineffectually*, or to permit Any Act of His to be *reſiſted and fruſtrated* by the Power of frail and mortal Men. And, were the Power *of God* the matter in queſtion, This Argument would indeed be undoubtedly good. But in *Moral* matters, where whatever is not done *voluntarily and without Compulſion*, is not done *at all*; the caſe is very different. For in *theſe* matters, to influence a Moral Agent with ſuch an Efficacy as *cannot be reſiſted*, is entirely to deſtroy the Morality of the Action, to take away the whole Nature of Virtue and Vice, and to make all Reward or Puniſhment impoſſible or unjuſt. So far therefore is it from being unworthy of God, to *forbear* exerting his irreſiſtible Power in *theſe* Caſes; that, on the contrary, it would be altogether unworthy of him to *exerciſe* That Power; becauſe it would be ſubverting of his whole Deſign, in creating rational and intelligent Beings at all *Moral Agents*, muſt be influenced only

by *Moral Motives*; by Reaſon and Argument, by Perſwaſion and Conviction, by Hopes and Fears. The *Efficacy* therefore of the Grace of God, *can* conſiſt *only* in laying before men *ſtrong Arguments* for their *Conviction*, and giving them ſufficient *Helps* and *Aſſiſtances* to overcome whatever would hinder them from acting according to ſuch conviction. Any *other* influence than what is of this *moral* nature; any Influence that amounted to *Force*, and could not be reſiſted; far from being truly *efficacious* to make Men *good and virtuous*, would on the contrary make it as *impoſſible* for them to have any Virtue or Goodneſs at all, as it is that a *Clock* or a *Watch* ſhould be virtuous and praiſe-worthy. SERM. XIII.

THE Summ is This: In order to give *God* his due Honour and Glory, and to keep up in Men's Minds a juſt Senſe of their continual Dependence upon him; 'tis neceſſary that we at all times acknowledge, that all our Powers and *natural* Faculties *themſelves* are entirely at firſt *derived* to us from God's free Goodneſs, and continually *preſerved* to us merely by

SERM. XIII.

the ſame good pleaſure; and that neither our *Being*, nor *any Power* we have, is in any wiſe owing to Ourſelves: That, much more, every *ſupernatural* Sufficiency, every *extraordinary* Degree of Aſſiſtance, every *revealed* Means of Knowledge, every *New* Motive to Virtue or Determent from Vice, every *Direction or Guidance in the way of Life* which we receive from the Knowledge of things *inviſible*, and from the kind Influence of the *Divine Spirit*; is wholly the *Gift*, or *Grace* of *God*: That the *Promiſe* of *Heaven* and of *eternal Happineſs* at all, as the Reward of our beſt *Endeavours* and moſt perfect *Services*, if ſuch were *poſſible* to be performed by us; that even *This* alſo is merely God's *free Bounty*, and *undeſerved Gift*, to unprofitable Servants: All This, I ſay, is of neceſſity to be acknowledged, in order to give *God* his *due Honour* and *juſt Glory*.

AT the ſame time, that the *Nature of Virtue and Vice* may not be taken away; 'tis alſo of no leſs neceſſity to be acknowledged, that as the natural *Faculties* wherewith God hath originally endowed Men, are in their own Power either to

make

SERM. XIII.

make uſe of or to *neglect*; ſo the ſupernatural *Aſſiſtances* afforded Men by the Revelation of the Goſpel, and by the Influence of the Divine Grace, are ſtill *but* in the Nature of *Aſſiſtances*, which may either be *complied with* or *rejected*: And the Gift of eternal Life, as 'tis the *free* Gift of God, which Men could not poſſibly deſerve, or claim, by virtue of any Work or Duty which they were capable of performing; ſo it is *not* a *forced* Gift, *impoſed* upon them whether they will or no; but *ſuch* a *free* Gift, as requires the *concurrence* of their *own Endeavours*, in *applying* and *making Uſe of* the Divine Aſſiſtance which inables them to obtain it. For this reaſon, the Apoſtle St *Peter* exhorts men to *grow in Grace*, as a Duty depending upon their *own Endeavours*, 2 *Pet.* iii. 18; and St *Paul* admoniſhes Men, *not* to *quench* or *grieve* the *Holy Spirit of God*, who *will not* forcibly *ſtrive* with Thoſe which reſiſt his good Motions; And Men are frequently blamed in Scripture for *receiving the Grace of God* in vain; for reſiſting *the*

SERM. XIII.

Holy Ghoſt, and for rejecting *the Counſel of God againſt themſelves.*

THE *Cauſe* of erroneous Opinions, in This and moſt other queſtions about which there have at any time been raiſed any controverſies, is generally This; that Men attending to *One* point only, and being ſollicitous to oppoſe ſtrongly ſome *particular* Errour, have been apt to do it in ſuch a manner, as has carried them out beyond the Truth of the Argument, and prevented them from guarding againſt being expoſed to Errour in ſome contrary Extreme. Thus in diſputing againſt the Errours of the Church of *Rome*, incautious perſons have frequently been betrayed by an unwiſe Zeal to make uſe of ſuch Arguments, as they were not aware might at the ſame time be alleged by Others of an oppoſite Perſwaſion, with the ſame Force againſt themſelves. And nothing is more common, than for Others on the contrary, in the heat of Controverſy with ſome of their Brethren who differ from them, to draw ſuch Arguments from Church-Authority, and General Councils, and the like;

like; as they are not enough ſenſible may on any other occaſion be uſed againſt Themſelves by Thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, with at leaſt as Great and perhaps Greater Force. Thus in like manner in the preſent caſe; If Any perſons, ſollicitous to maintain the Liberty of Man's Will, have at any time aſſerted ſuch a Power in Men's Uſe of their natural Faculties, as to make them *not dependent* upon God; or ſuch as may *of Right* claim the Reward of Heaven, and not of *Free Grace* and *undeſerved Promiſe*; Theſe indeed, (if any Such have been, and they have not rather been *miſtaken* by their Adverſaries,) Theſe, I ſay, *going about to eſtabliſh* their own *righteouſneſs*, (in the Senſe St *Paul* blames, *Rom*, x. 3.) and *not ſubmitting themſelves unto the righteouſneſs of God*, have indeed *fruſtrated the Grace of God*, (as the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaks again, Gal. ii. 21;) *For if righteouſneſs comes by* This way, *then* undoubtedly *Chriſt is dead in vain*. But then Others on the *contrary part*, ſollicitous (as they conceived) to maintain God's abſolute Sovereignty in all things,

SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII.

things, and the Efficacy of Divine Grace; to magnify the work of God in Men, and to depreſs and humble the Vanity of Thoſe who aſſume Any thing to themſelves as *of themſelves*; have almoſt perpetually urged ſuch Arguments againſt their Adverſaries, as they were not aware might by the Enemies of all Religion, the Aſſerters of Neceſſity and Fate, be with equal Strength alleged againſt *Themſelves*. And by *exalting* (as They thought) the Grace of God into an *irreſiſtible Efficacy*, they have conſequently made it, in truth and reality, to be of *No Efficacy at all*. For, in matters of morality and religion, That *only* is of any Effect, which makes men, in the *moral* ſenſe, *better* than they would otherwiſe be: And then *only* are they morally *Better*, when by *moral* Motives, by conviction of *Truth* and *Reaſon*, by well grounded *Hopes* and juſt *Fears*, they are perſwaded and prevailed upon to love and to chuſe freely what is *Right* and *Good*. If by any *irreſiſtible* Influence they are *compelled* to do it, the beſt Action in the World has no longer any Goodneſs in it; being not done

done by *Them*, any more than by any *material* or *unintelligent Inſtrument*, to which no man ever aſcribes either *Good* or *Evil*. The *Truth* therefore is plainly This: If we will frame to ourſelves right Notions of Religion, Notions which truly tend to the Glory of *God*, and to promote Virtue and Obedience in *Men*; the *Power* aſcribed to *Men*, muſt neither on the one ſide be ſuppoſed to be ſuch, that thereby men can *Merit* any thing, as of *themſelves*; neither on the other ſide muſt the Influence of the *Power* or *Grace of God* be imagined to be ſuch, as will make vain and needleſs our own Endeavours. But the *Grace of God*, manifeſted in the *merciful Terms of the Goſpel*, in the *clear Revelation of a Future State, and of a Judgment to come*, in God's *declared Acceptance of Repentance through Chriſt*, and in the *promiſed Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit*; This *Grace of God*, I ſay, effectually *enables* men to perform their Duty. And the *Power and Will of Man*, applying and making *Uſe* of that Aſſiſtance to an actual Improvement in Virtue, brings forth on *its* part, thoſe acceptable Fruits of SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII.

of the Spirit, which wicked men are *therefore* juſtly condemned for not bringing forth, becauſe *They alſo* had the means of Grace offered and propoſed to them, but wilfully and obſtinately refuſed to be amended thereby. *God* hath, *of his good pleaſure*, or of his free Grace, *given them both to will and to do*; and yet, through their own perverſeneſs and obſtinate diſobedience, they *work* not *out their own Salvation.*

WHEN therefore the Scripture tells us that *by Grace we are ſaved*, and yet that at the ſame time we *work out our own Salvation*; 'tis plain that theſe *different Phraſes* are only *different repreſentations* of *one and the ſame thing*, under *different reſpects*: Juſt as *Heighth* and *Depth* are *one and the ſame thing*, conſidered only in *different Poſitions.* Men are ſaved *by Grace*, becauſe without God's gracious Aſſiſtance and Acceptance of their imperfect Endeavours, they could not of themſelves attain unto Salvation; and at the ſame time 'tis no leſs true, that they *work out their own Salvation*, becauſe without their leading a Life of Virtue

Virtue and Obedience through a diligent Use of thoſe means which the Grace of God affords them, the *Grace of God* alone will in no wiſe force them to be ſaved. Thus *God's working in* or *with Us*, and *our working together with God*, are promiſcuouſly expreſſed in Scripture, as Cauſes concurrently producing the ſame Effect. And mens being *hardened*, or *wicked*; *hardened of* God, or *hardening* themſelves, are phraſes uſed in like manner to ſignify one and the ſame thing under different Reſpects. They harden *themſelves*; becauſe 'tis by their own Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs only, that they become obdurate. And they are hardened of *God*, not by any proper Act or Efficiency of his, (except perhaps in ſome extraordinary judicial Caſes;) but by his juſtly ceaſing to ſtrive with them any longer, giving them up *unto their own hearts luſts*, (as the Scripture expreſſes it,) *letting them follow their own imaginations*, *and* giving them over *to a reprobate mind*, *to work all unrighteouſneſs with greedineſs*. Laſtly; 'Tis very remarkable to This purpoſe, that the very *ſame* Acts and Habits, which

SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII. which are known by the Name of *Moral Virtues*, are alſo in Scripture ſtiled *Graces* or *Gifts of the Spirit*: *Moral Virtues*, as they are ſeated in the Mind of Man, directing his Intentions, and appearing in his Practiſe: And, at the ſame time, *Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit*; as they are promoted by the *Arguments of revealed Religion*, by the *Aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God*, and by being *practiſed in expreſs Obedience to the Divine Commands*. *The* Fruit *of the* Spirit, (ſaith St *Paul*, Eph. v. 9.) *is in all* Goodneſs *and* Righteouſneſs *and* Truth. And *Gal.* v. 22. *The* Fruit *of the* Spirit, *is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance; againſt Such, there is No Law.*

AND Now, having *premiſed* a large explication of the *general* Doctrine, upon which the exhortation in the Text is founded; I ſhould in the *next* place have proceeded to conſider *diſtinctly*, the ſeveral *particular* expreſſions made uſe of in the Text: *What* is meant, by *working out our Salvation*; *what* it is, to work it out *with Fear and Trembling*; and *why*,

in *That* manner: *What* is meant by God's *giving us both to will and to do, of* his *good pleaſure*; and *how This* conſideration is a Motive to *Us*, to endeavour to *work out* our own *Salvation*. But the diſtinct Conſideration of Theſe particulars, muſt be referred to a following opportunity. SERM. XIII.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

Of the GRACE *of* GOD.

PHIL. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th verſe.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.

IN a foregoing Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I premiſed a large Explication of the *general* Doctrine, upon which the Exhortation in the Text is founded. I ſhall now proceed to con-

SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV.

ſider *diſtinctly*, the ſeveral *particular* Expreſſions made uſe of in the Text: *What* is meant by *working out our Salvation*; *what* it is, to work it out *with Fear and Trembling*; and *why*, in That manner; *what* is meant by God's *working in us both to will and to do, of* his *good pleaſure*; and *How This* conſideration is a Motive to *Us*, to endeavour to *work out* our own *Salvation*.

I. IN the *firſt* place I am to conſider *what* is meant, by *working out our* Salvation. The word *Salvation*, originally and in its *general* Notion, ſignifies *Deliverance* from any great and imminent Danger; eſpecially *ſuch* Deliverance or Eſcape, as is accompliſhed not without labour and hazard. And from hence it comes in Scripture to be applied in the *Spiritual* ſenſe, to ſignify *particularly* and by way of *eminence*, the *Great and Final Deliverance* of virtuous and good men from that *general* Deſtruction, which, in the nature of Things, and by the righteous appointment of God, muſt at laſt overwhelm a wicked and incorrigible world. *The whole World*, ſaith St *John*, *lieth*

lieth in Wickedneſs, or, as the Original has it, *under the Power of the wicked One*, 1 ep. v. 19; that is, The greater part of Mankind, through their eaſineſs in yielding to the Temptations of Unrighteouſneſs, their negligence in not correcting the Corruptions of their Nature, and their Perverſeneſs in chuſing wilfully the Ways of Wickedneſs and Debauchery; are altogether incapable of that State of Happineſs, which is in Scripture ſtiled *The Kingdom of God*. For, what St *Paul* affirms in the *literal* Senſe, that *Fleſh and Blood*, mortal and corruptible Bodies, *cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*; is in the *ſpiritual* Senſe ſtill *more* neceſſarily true, that *wicked and corrupt* Minds ſhall in no caſe enter therein. *The new Heavens and new Earth*, which *we look for according to his Promiſe*, are ſuch wherein *dwelleth* only *Righteouſneſs*; that is, Meekneſs and Juſtice, Purity and Holineſs, Faithfulneſs and Truth. And therefore our Saviour, ſpeaking of the reſurrection of the Saints unto eternal Life, elegantly ſtiles it *The Reſurrection of the* Juſt, *Luk.* xiv. 14. God is *of purer eyes*, *than*

SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV.

than to behold iniquity; and therefore into the heavenly *Jeruſalem there ſhall in no wiſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination or maketh a Lie:* There ſhall be admitted no Fraud or Violence, no Arbitrarineſs or Injuſtice, no Debauchery or Impurity whatſoever; but *the Spirits of* Juſt *men* only, *made perfect* by the Practiſe of *Virtue*, and by the influences of the good *Spirit of God.* Now the Bulk of the wicked and corrupt World, being (in the nature of Things) incapable of inheriting This Kingdom of Righteouſneſs, muſt of neceſſity, not by any Cruel and Severe Decree of God, but of neceſſity in point of Wiſdom and Good Government, they muſt be excluded out of Heaven, and, by the righteous and impartial Sentence of the unerring Judge, be in ſuch a manner, as ſhall be exactly ſuitable to each of their reſpective Demerits, ſent into Deſtruction. *From* which Deſtruction, *They who* (as our Lord expreſſes it,) *ſhall be thought* worthy *to obtain That Life, and the Reſurrection from the Dead,* ſhall be Saved. Not that all *Others* alſo ſhall

ſhall not equally riſe from the Dead; but that *That only* deſerves to be truly and *emphatically* ſtiled the *Reſurrection from the Dead*, which is a *Reſurrection unto* Life *and Glory*. This Deliverance therefore of all juſt and good men, by the Mercy of God, and through the Interpoſition of Chriſt, from that final Deſtruction, which muſt naturally and of neceſſity, under the Government of a Wiſe and Righteous Judge, fall upon a wicked and corrupt World; this, I ſay, is what the Scripture calls *Salvation*. The *Conſequence* of which Salvation is indeed moreover mens being admitted into That incorruptible *Inheritance*, that unſpeakable and never-fading *Happineſs*, which is the Free Gift of God through Chriſt, to Thoſe whom in his unerring Judgment he ſhall think fit to advance beyond their natural and original capacities, to be *Heirs of God* and *Joint-Heirs with Chriſt*, in his eternal Kingdom of Glory.

BUT the *Primary* Notion of *Salvation*, according to the *proper* ſignification of the word, is *Deliverance from Deſtruction*.

SERM. XIV.

And the *Greatneſs* of this Deliverance is, in the *New Teſtament*, lively repreſented unto us by ſeveral remarkable Types. 'Tis repreſented *firſt*, by the Salvation of *Lot* out of *Sodom*; when God with Fire from Heaven overthrew thoſe wicked Cities, *ſetting them forth for an example*, having deſtroyed them with an irreparable Deſtruction, which St *Jude* calls *the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, ver. 7. 'Tis repreſented in the *next* place, by the Salvation of the *children of Iſrael* out of *Egypt*; when God overthrew *Pharaoh* and his whole Army in the Sea, but led his own people ſafely, through the Sea and through the Wilderneſs, into the promiſed *Canaan*. 'Tis repreſented *again*, by the Salvation of thoſe who eſcaped at the final deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; concerning which our Saviour foretold, *Matt.* xxiv. 40. that *then ſhould two* men *be* together *in the field*; *the one ſhould be taken, and the other left*; And that *two women ſhould be grinding* together *at the mill*; *the one ſhould be taken, and the other left*. *Laſtly*, 'Tis repreſented by the Salvation of *Noah*

Noah and his Family in the Ark; when God deſtroyed at once the whole impenitent World, with a Deluge of Water. For ſo St *Peter* expreſsly applies the ſimilitude, 1 ep. iii. 20. *The like figure whereunto, even Baptiſm* (ſaith he) *doth alſo Now ſave Us.* Only, leaſt by *Baptiſm* any man ſhould be ſo weak as to think he meant the bare outward Form or Ceremony, the mere Name or Profeſſion of a Chriſtian; he adds in the very ſame verſe this moſt important caution, that thereby he underſtands, *not the putting away of the Filth of the Fleſh,* (not *the mere Waſhing* or the *Ceremony* of Baptiſm,) *but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God* in the courſe of a virtuous and a Chriſtian Life. SERM. XIV.

Now This being the true Notion of the word *Salvation,* the Duty of working out *this Salvation,* which is what we are ſo earneſtly exhorted to in the Text, muſt conſequently ſignify the making uſe of thoſe *Means* which are proper and ſufficient to obtain This *End:* That is, it muſt ſignify the *whole Progreſs* of our Deliverance, by a Life of *Virtue* and

SERM. XIV.

true *Religion*, from the *Power and Tyranny of the Devil*, from the *Dominion and Slavery of Sin*, and from the *Puniſhment of Death*.

MEN in the State of Heathen *ignorance and wickedneſs*, being as it were habitually ſubject to a Spirit of Deluſion, of Impiety, and of all kinds of Debauchery, are in Scripture repreſented as being in *Slavery to Satan*; who is therefore ſtiled the *Prince of This World*, and the God *of This World*, the *Prince of the Power of the Air*, the *Spirit that worketh in the children of diſobedience*. From This *Tyranny of the Devil* men are ſaved, by forſaking the *Idolatry of the Nations*, and returning to the *worſhip of the true God of the Univerſe*, as taught in the *Goſpel of Chriſt*: Being *delivered*, as St *Paul* expreſſes it, *from the Power of Darkneſs, and tranſlated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*, Col. i. 13.

LIKEWISE thoſe, who having embraced the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, yet live unworthy of their Holy Profeſſion, by means of *Any Habit of Unrighteouſneſs or Debauchery*; are repreſented in Scripture,

as

as being *Slaves to Sin*, and ſtill *in the Snare of the Devil.* The expreſſions of This kind, are very frequent and elegant; that ſuch perſons, are *Servants of Sin*; that *Sin has the Dominion over them*; that they are *overcome by it*; and *brought in bondage to it*; that they are the *Servants of Corruption*, and the like. And becauſe the Devil is the *Head* of this Corruption, who *Tempts* men into it, and *delights* in it; therefore, whoſoever lives in Sin, notwithſtanding his profeſſing himſelf a *Diſciple of Chriſt*, is ſtill in reality *the Servant of Satan:* 1 Joh. iii. 8. *He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil; for the Devil ſinneth from the Beginning.* Whoſoever is ſo falſe to himſelf, as not to be able to reſiſt the Temptations of Unrighteouſneſs, imitates, and is ſubject to, the Great Enemy of God and Goodneſs; is *in the Snare of the Devil, and taken captive by him at his Will.* Now the Deſign of Chriſt's coming into the World was to *deſtroy theſe works of the Devil*; to ſave *men from their Sins*, Matt. i. 21. to *perſwade* them, and to *enable* them, to ſave *themſelves*

SERM. XIV.

ſelves from amongſt a wicked and *corrupt generation*; to *deliver them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious Liberty of the children of God. Working out our own Salvation* therefore, (conſidered as an Exhortation given to ſuch as are already Chriſtians,) ſignifies *making a* diligent Uſe of the Means and Encouragements which God has afforded us in the Goſpel, to aſſiſt and enable us *effectually to reform every evil Habit*, and to improve in the Practiſe of every Virtue, *perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God.* The *Conſequence* of which *Salvation from* Sin, is *Salvation alſo from the* Puniſhment which God has denounced againſt Sinners. And not only ſo, but upon them who *ſhall be thought worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man*, ſhall be conferred moreover God's free Gift of Eternal Life and Happineſs.

THE Exhortation therefore in the Text, to *work out our own Salvation*, is of the ſame import with That of St *Peter*, 2 ep. i. 10. *Brethren, give diligence to make your Calling and Election ſure*; *for*

for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall: for ſo an Entrance ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. From which Admonition of St *Peter*, compared with This in the Text, it follows plainly and undeniably, that Men (by God's Aſſiſtance) have a *Power*, as well as an *Obligation*, to *work out their own Salvation*; and that their *election*, that is, their being *choſen* and *approved* of God, depends upon That *diligence* and *ſincere indeavour* of their *own*, which the Apoſtle expreſsly exhorts them to make uſe of to this purpoſe, that thereby they may *ſecure* their being *elected* of *God*. SERM. XIV.

II. I AM to conſider in the *ſecond* place, *what* is meant by working out our Salvation *with Fear and Trembling*; and *why* it muſt be done in That manner.

Now the words *Fear and Trembling*, are not put here to expreſs a *Paſſion*, but to denote *Care and Diligence* in our *Actions*, in oppoſition to *Preſumption*, *Remiſsneſs*, or *negligent Confidence*. According to thoſe *other* Admonitions in Scripture;

SERM. XIV.

ture; *be not high-minded, but fear*; and, *let him that* thinketh *he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* The wiſe man obſerves, Prov. xxviii. 14. *Happy is the man that* feareth, that is, who is cautious, *always*; *but he that* hardeneth *his Heart*, that is, who is careleſs and negligent, *ſhall fall into Miſchief.* And, *To This man will I look*, ſaith God himſelf by the Prophet, Iſ. lxvi. 2. *even to Him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word.* St *Paul*, though ſo eminent an Apoſtle, yet ſpeaks thus concerning his *own Practiſe* upon This Head: *I keep under my Body*, ſays he, *and bring it into ſubjection*, 1 Cor. ix. 27, *leſt by any means, when I have preached to Others, I myſelf ſhould become a caſt-away.* And Phil. iii. 11. *If by any* means, ſays he, *I might attain unto the reſurrection of the dead*; *Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect*;-----*But this One thing I do*; *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the Mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.*

THE

SERM. XIV.

THE *Reaſons why* we are exhorted to work out our Salvation after this manner, with *Fear and Trembling*; that is, with *Caution and Diligence*, with *Care and Earneſt Application*; are,

1*ſt*, BECAUSE 'tis of *all* others the thing of the *greateſt importance* to us. 'Tis the *One thing neceſſary*; the Preſervation of *ourſelves*, of our *Souls*, of our *Life*, of our *Happineſs for ever*. What *Naaman*'s Servant ſaid to his Maſter upon *another* occaſion, is *much more* applicable *here*; *My Father, if he had bid thee do ſome* Great *thing, wouldſt thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he ſaith unto thee, waſh and be clean? Skin for Skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his* Life; for the preſervation of this *ſhort*, this *tranſitory* life: *What* then *ſhall he give in Exchange for his* Soul, in Exchange for his portion in *Eternity?* If therefore no wiſe Man, according to our Saviour's Argument in the Parable, attempts to *build a Tower*, without *firſt ſitting down and counting the Coſt* of it; how much more does it behove every reaſonable perſon, to be ſolli-

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SERM. XIV.

citous before all things, that he be well aſſured in his *own* Underſtanding, and not by mere hap-hazard rely blindly upon *Others*, in order to find *which* is the True Way of Salvation; and that he be accordingly *diligent*, in walking in That Way!

2*dly*, ANOTHER reaſon why we are required to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is becauſe of the *Difficulties* we muſt expect to meet with in the Work. *Difficulties*, not in the Nature of the *thing itſelf:* For Chriſt's *Yoke is eaſy, and his Burden light. Virtue* is of all things *the moſt natural and the moſt reaſonable*; and the *Commandments of God*, in themſelves *no way grievous.* But *great Difficulties* often ariſe, by the perverſe oppoſition of *wicked men* from *without*, and the corrupt inclination of *unreaſonable and ungoverned Appetites* from *within.* Inſomuch that even *the righteous*, ſaith St *Peter*, *ſcarcely are ſaved:* And St *Paul* ſpeaks of Men being *ſaved, ſo as by fire*; that is, eſcaping with difficulty, as out of a houſe which is in Flames: *ſaved with Fear, pulled out of the Fire*, ſo St *Jude* expreſſes it, *ver.* 23. The *Fleſh* luſteth

luſteth againſt the Spirit; warring againſt the reaſon and law of our Minds; ſo that we cannot, without ſome Pains and Care, do the things that are moſt reaſonable. And when we have perfectly conquered *ourſelves*; yet ſtill, through the Difficulties brought upon us by *Others*, by the *Profane Perſecutor*, or the *Superſtitious Bigot*; by the Blenders of *humane* Authority, with *Divine*; and thoſe who mingle and confound together the *Powers of* This World and the *Doctrines of* Men, with the *Commands of* God; by Theſe is the *Gate* often made *ſtrait*, and the *Way narrow*, ſo that through *tribulation only* can we poſſibly *enter into the Kingdom of God.*

3*dly*, A *third* reaſon, why we are directed to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is, becauſe it is a Work that can be done but *Once*; and if we *Once* miſcarry, we have loſt ourſelves for ever. *It is appointed for Men* Once *to die, and after That, the Judgment:* And *when* Once *the maſter of the Houſe is riſen up and hath ſhut to the door*, there is no more Admiſſion. This Argument is repreſented to us under a very

SERM. XIV.

very elegant Similitude by one of the moſt *antient* Writers next to the Apoſtles times: *As a Potter*, ſays he, *while the Clay is moiſt and ſoft, moulds it over and over again, if it pleaſes him not at firſt; but after it has been once hardened in the Fire, its ſhape can be mended no more: So in the preſent life, God affords Men from time to time Space and Means of Repentance; but after Death and Judgment has once paſſed upon them, and they be caſt into the Fire, there is no more Remedy for ever.*

4*thly*, WE are exhorted to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, and to be *perpetually* upon our *guard*, becauſe we are *continually* in danger of *New Temptations*, and *at* no *time ſecure* from their Aſſaults. Temptations of one ſort or other, perpetually ſurround us; and the Negligent, or Preſumptuous, cannot fail of being frequently betrayed into Sin. From hence are thoſe repeated Admonitions of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, to *watch* and to be *ready always*, to *ſtand faſt in the Faith*, to *quit ourſelves like men*, to *be ſtrong*, to *be ſober* and *vigilant*, to *take heed leſt there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief*; and

and to *exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt, a promiſe being left us of entring into his Reſt, any of us ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.* SERM. XIV.

Laſtly: ANOTHER reaſon why we are required to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is, becauſe whatever progreſs in Virtue we have already made, yet if hereafter we fall back into unrighteous Practiſes, we loſe out reward. *The Juſt*, ſaith God, *ſhall live by Faith; but if any Man draws back, my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him:* For *no Man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God.* As in a *Race*, All run, but he only that perſeveres, obtains the Prize; and in a *warfare*, All fight, but he only that overcomes gains the Crown of Victory; ſo, in the *ſpiritual* Combat, *he that endures to the End*, ſaith our Lord, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved.* For to them who by *patient Continuance* in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, to *Them* only is made the Promiſe of eternal Life. Wherefore, as St *Paul* admoniſhes, *we ought to give the more earneſt Heed to the things which we*

SERM. XIX.

have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip, Heb. ii. 1.

III. THE *Third* thing I propoſed to conſider in the Text, was, *what* is meant by God's *working in us both to will and to do of* his *good pleaſure*. Now the plain and full meaning of This, is;

1*ſt*, THAT *God* is to us the only *Author* of all thoſe *Powers and Faculties*, which we vulgarly call *Natural*. *In Him we Live, Move, and have our Being*. From *Him* we are indued with *Reaſon and Underſtanding*, with the *Faculty of diſcerning between Good and Evil*, with the *Power* of *Willing and Chooſing what is Right*. We are not *ſufficient of ourſelves to* think *any thing as of ourſelves; but our Sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Weak therefore is That diſtinction ſo often found in the Writings of Divines, between *Nature* and *Grace*; as if *One* was not equally the Gift of God, as the *Other*.

2*dly*, GOD's giving us *both to will and to do*, ſignifies his affording us moreover *Supernatural* Helps. Such is, the *Revelation of the Goſpel*; which is therefore frequently

frequently in Scripture called, *The Grace of God*; Tit. ii. 11. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men.* SERM. XIV. Col. i. 6.

UNDER which *general* Grace, are included more *particularly*, the following Supernatural Helps. A *clear and distinct Knowledge of our Duty*, more distinct than could be discovered by the Light of Nature alone. A more plain and express *bringing of Life and Immortality to Light*, by the particular Revelation of a *judgment to come*. *Exceeding Great and precious Promises*; by the Faith and expectation of which, we are enabled to *overcome the World*, to *quench all the Fiery darts of the Devil*, and to become *partakers of the Divine Nature* by perfecting righteousness and true Holiness. An *Assurance of the Forgiveness of past Sins upon Repentance*; which is what the Scripture emphatically calls *Grace*; *The* Law *came by Moses, but* Grace *and Truth came by Jesus Christ*. The *Assistance of the Divine Spirit* in the *constant and ordinary* practise of our Duty; by which we are *renewed*, *justified*, *sanctified*, and have

SERM. XIV.

the Love of God ſhed abroad in our Hearts. Not that the Spirit of God acts upon us by way of neceſſary *compulſion*, forcibly and irreſiſtibly; (for the exhortations given us, not to *quench* and *grieve* and drive him from us, evidently ſhow the contrary;) But he *helps our Infirmities*, in the way of *Moral Aſſiſtance*, *Perſwaſion*, *Direction* and *Concurrence*; but *will not always ſtrive with men* who obſtinately reſiſt his good Motions. *Wiſd.* i. 4. *Into a malicious Soul Wiſdom ſhall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is ſubject unto Sin; For the Holy Spirit of Diſcipline will flee deceit, and remove from Thoughts that are without Underſtanding, and will not abide when unrighteouſneſs cometh in.*

Laſtly, UNDER *Extraordinary Trials*, the Goſpel aſſures us of ſtill more *particular and extraordinary Supports:* that God *will never leave us, nor forſake us* but *will with the Temptation* always *make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it*; and particularly, that in time of great Perſecution, *it ſhall be given us in that ſame*

ſame Hour what we ſhall ſpeak and *what we ſhall do.* SERM. XIV.

THESE are, over and above our *natural* Powers and Faculties, the *Supernatural* Helps and Aſſiſtances afforded us by the Goſpel: *Both* of which are included in the Aſſertion in the Text, that *'tis God which worketh in us both to will and to do.*

THE *laſt* words added in the Text, ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας, *of his good pleaſure*, do not ſignify, as *Some* have imagined, that God works all theſe things *arbitrarily*, without any regard to the Diſpoſitions and Qualifications of Men. But the True meaning of the words is, that he does all theſe things *through his* Goodneſs; That is the Senſe, of the word which we render *good pleaſure.* 'Tis God's *Goodneſs* which moves him to *work in us both to will and to do*; to give us both the *Faculties of Nature*, and the *Supernatural Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel*, to lead us unto Life and Happineſs.

IV. THE *Fourth* and *Laſt* thing I propoſed from the Text, was, to ſhow *How* This conſideration of God's *working in us both to*

SERM. XII.

will and to do, is an Argument or Motive to *Us* to *work out our* own *Salvation*. *Work out your* own *Salvation*, For *it is* God *that worketh in you both to Will and to Do of his good pleaſure*. The Meaning plainly is; not, that *God* does *All* for us; For then the *Contrary* conſequence muſt needs have been true, that we could do *nothing* for *ourſelves*: But *God*, of his great Goodneſs gives us *Power*; therefore *We may* and *ought* to *Act*. And we may depend alſo, that if we be ſincere in the Uſe of the Powers he has given us, our Endeavours ſhall not be in vain. For, *Greater is He that is in Us, than He that is in the World*; and *if God be for us, who can be againſt Us?* The Exhortation therefore in the Text, is of the ſame Import with that in Eph. vi. 10. *Finally, my Brethren, be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Power of* his *might*.

THE *Inferences* proper to be drawn from the whole of what has been ſaid, are:

1. FROM hence we may obſerve, how little Foundation there is in Scripture for thoſe Men's Opinion, who underſtanding

derſtanding figurative Expreſſions literally and abſurdly, contend that wicked Men have no Power to do any thing towards their own Converſion; and conſequently aſcribe the Cauſe of Men's Impenitency, to *God*'s not giving them (as they call it) the *Grace to Repent*. Which is a very great Abuſe of a Scripture-expreſſion. For, God's *giving* or *granting* Men *Repentance*, ſignifies (in Scripture) his granting them the Favour to have their Repentance *accepted* to the Forgiveneſs of paſt Sins, or *allowed* inſtead of Innocence; and not his *conferring* Repentance upon them, as an eternal Donation: Which is altogether unintelligible. Nor is it leſs abſurd, from thoſe paſſages where very bad Men are ſaid to be dead *in treſpaſſes and ſins*; and that when they amend, *God* creates *in them a new Heart*; to conclude literally, that wicked Men have no more Power to *amend their manners* than to *raiſe themſelves from the dead*, or to *create themſelves anew*. Which Doctrine, muſt of neceſſity make Men very *ſlothful* Servants. SERM. XIV.

SERM. XIV.

2*dly*, THE *ſecond* Uſe proper to be made of the explication now given of the words of the Text, is to Exhort Men to be *diligent* in working out their own Salvation by the Uſe of thoſe Means which God has worked or implanted in them. Which exhortation cannot be better expreſſed, than in the words of the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. i. 12. *Seek not Death in the Errour of your life; and pull not upon yourſelves deſtruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not Death, neither has he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living. But ungodly Men with their works and words called it unto them.* And Eccluſ. xv. 11. *Say not thou, the Lord has cauſed me to err; for he hath no need of the ſinful man. The Lord hateth all abomination; and they that fear God, love it not. He himſelf made Men from the beginning, and left them in the hands of his counſel; if thou wilt, to keep the Commandments, and to perform acceptable Faithfulneſs. He hath ſet fire and water before thee; ſtretch forth thy hand unto*

whether

whether thou wilt. Before man is Life and Death; and whether him liketh ſhall be given him. For the Wiſdom of the Lord is great; and he is mighty in Power, and beholdeth all things. And his Eyes are upon them that fear him, and he knoweth every work of Man. He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither has he given any man licence to ſin.

SERM. XIV.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

Of the KINGDOM *of* GOD.

MATT. vi. 10.

Thy Kingdom come.

THOUGH *every Chriſtian* acknowledges this Prayer of our Lord's compoſing, to be a complete Pattern and Direction, as to the *Subject-matter* of the things we are to pray for; yet Many, very Many, 'tis to be feared, perpetually repeat the *Words*, with very little Attention to the *Senſe* expreſſed by them: Not conſidering, that All Devotion

SERM. XV.

votion conſiſts entirely in the Application of the *Mind* to God, with an *Underſtanding* of what it deſires; and not at all in the mere repeating with the *Lips* certain cuſtomary *Forms of Words.*

OUR Lord in the *former* part of this Prayer, after having taught us that the True and Proper Object of Worſhip, to whom our Petitions ought conſtantly (through *His* Mediation) to be directed, is *the Father which is* in Heaven; (that is, *the Moſt* High; he who, not in *Place or Situation*, but in *Dignity and Dominion*, is *Supreme over All:*) Our Lord, I ſay, in the *former* part of this Prayer, after directing us to the True Object of Worſhip, our *Heavenly Father*, inſtructs us to pray in the *firſt* place, for Bleſſings *ſpiritual and eternal*; and then, in the *following* part of the Prayer, to ask for the *Comforts and Neceſſaries* of this *preſent Life.* In the *former* part, among the Petitions for Bleſſings of a *Spiritual* nature, and one of the *Principal* of Thoſe Petitions, are the *Words of the Text:* Words of a very large and extenſive ſignification; comprehending in brief, almoſt

almoſt the *Whole Notion* of True Religi- SERM. on; and, therefore, *particularly* worthy XV. to be the Subject of our Meditations: *Thy Kingdom come.*

GOD is *by* Nature *King* over All; and his *Kingdom* is the *Univerſe.* His *Dominion* is infinite and everlaſting, his *Power* abſolute and irreſiſtible, his *Glory* inexpreſſible and inconceivable. *Of him, and Through him, and To him, are all things,* Rom. xi. 36. That is, *For* his *Pleaſure,* all things were *created*; *By* his *Providence,* all things are *preſerved*; *To* his *Glory,* all things *terminate.* The *Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-work.* The whole Frame of Nature obeys his Commands; and all the Powers of the Univerſe depend entirely upon the Word of his Mouth.

BUT becauſe the True Greatneſs and Dignity of a Governour conſiſts chiefly in the Obedience of them that can *diſobey*: Becauſe 'tis more *excellent* to be obeyed by *Reaſon and Underſtanding,* by *Will and Choice,* than by mere *neceſſity of Nature*: Becauſe 'tis more *noble* to go-

SERM. XV.

vern *Free Agents* by *moral conſiderations*, by the *Knowledge* of what is intrinſically *Good or Evil*, by a *Senſe* of the Excellency of *Truth and Virtue*, by the *Wiſdom* of reaſonable and uſeful *Laws*, and by the *Views* of proper *Rewards and Puniſhments*, than to have *Power* over infinite Syſtems of *inanimate Matter*, which has no Senſe of the Regularity of its own Motions, nor capacity to perceive the Wiſdom and Glory of its Creator: Therefore the *Kingdom* of God *principally* conſiſts, in his Government of *reaſonable and intelligent* Creatures; in his being *ſerved and obeyed* by thoſe, who at the ſame time are capable of *diſobeying*; who by their *own Actions* ſet forth his Glory, and not merely in their being *Acted upon* by *Him*; who in their ſeveral Stations and Degrees, according to the Light that is afforded them, *diſcern* what is *Right*, and *approve* what is *Good*, and *act* by their *Free Power*, and are *conſcious* of the Excellency of *Virtue*, and *Love* him whom they Obey, and are made *Happy* by the participation of his Perfections. This is That, wherein *principally* conſiſts the

King-

Kingdom of God: A Kingdom, wherein ſhines forth the *Goodneſs*, and *Juſtice*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Holineſs*, of the Supreme Governour, as clearly as his *Power and Dominion* does in his ruling the whole material Univerſe.

By *Sin*, This Kingdom of God, This his Government over the *Hearts* and *Wills* of the rational part of the Creation, is *oppoſed* and *withſtood*. For his *natural Kingdom*, the Kingdom of his *Power*, *cannot* be reſiſted. In *This* reſpect, the whole World is in his Hand as a Duſt of the Ballance; He can withdraw from all things their very *Being* itſelf, and, with a Blaſt of his mouth, whenever he pleaſes, reduce them all into Nothing in a Moment. So that 'tis a very *abſurd* Notion, which ſome have entertained, from certain figurative expreſſions of Scripture very much miſunderſtood; as if the Devil had attempted to oppoſe the Almighty with *Force*, and had contended with him for the *Dominion of the Univerſe*. No: Such repreſentations as Theſe are only the Fictions of Poets: But, indeed, the *Devil rebelled* againſt God, in the ſame

SERM. XV.

ſame Senſe wherein *wicked* men *rebel* againſt him. Not by thinking to reſiſt his *Power*, but by preſumptuouſly venturing to diſobey his *Will*, in thoſe things wherein the Nature of Virtue and Vice, and the very Eſſence of Moral Government, neceſſarily requires that they ſhould not be over-ruled and compelled by Force. For here, the Thing that God requires is the *Free Conſent of the Will*; which, in the nature of things, is not ſubject to Compulſion; *Obedience itſelf* being *No obedience*, where there was no poſſibility of having *diſobeyed*. By *Sin* therefore this *Moral Kingdom of God* began to be oppoſed; by the *Sins* of *Evil Angels*, and by the *Sins* of *Wicked men*: Among whom, as they corrupted themſelves by degrees, in departing from the Living God; the Devil ſet up a Kingdom of Idolatry and Great Wickedneſs, in oppoſition to the Righteous Kingdom of God. In order to *deſtroy* which *Works of the Devil*; (to *deſtroy* them, not by the exerciſe of *Omnipotence*, but by the eſtabliſhment of *Virtue and True Religion*, which is the *Proper* and the Only *proper* Deſtruction

Deſtruction of Immorality and Vice;) God was pleaſed to give aſſiſtance and ſtrength to the Light of Nature and Reaſon, by making Revelations of himſelf from time to time to the degenerate world, and of the true manner of worſhipping him; firſt by the *Patriarchs*, whom he appointed to be *Preachers of Righteouſneſs* both before and after the Flood; and then by *Moſes* and the *Prophets*; and at laſt by his *Own Son*; who came into the World, and was *manifeſted* (as St *John* aſſures us) *for* This *Cauſe*, *that he might deſtroy the Works of the Devil*; that is, that he might root out Idolatry and Superſtitious Worſhip, and reform men from Debauchery and all Unrighteous Practices; that by the Knowledge, Worſhip, and Love of the One True God and Maker of all things, in Purity and Holineſs of Life, in Juſtice, Meekneſs, and univerſal Charity and Good-will towards each Other, he might bring them back, from a ſtate of general corruption, to become Worthy and Obedient Subjects of his Father's Kingdom of Righteouſneſs. SERM. XV.

SERM. XV.

FOR This reaſon, the *State* of the *Goſpel*, the *Religion* of *Chriſt*, the *Obedience* of *Faith*, is in Scripture perpetually ſtiled the *Kingdom of God:* That Kingdom of God, which we are commanded to *ſeek*, in the *righteouſneſs thereof:* That Kingdom, which our Saviour told the *Jews*, when he began to preach, was Then *come unto them:* Which he elſewhere declared to the *Phariſees, cometh not with obſervation; neither ſhall they ſay, Lo here, or lo there; for behold, the Kingdom of God is* within *you:* Which, he aſſured his Diſciples, *whoſoever did not receive* with the Meekneſs and Inoffenſiveneſs of *a little child, ſhould not enter thereinto* at all; and which, he threatens, in caſe of mens unworthineſs, ſhould be *taken from* One Nation, and *given to Another* that would *bring forth the Fruits* thereof: That Kingdom, which, in his *Parables*, our Lord repreſents under *various ſimilitudes* of a *moral* ſignification; ſetting forth, by apt and proper Compariſons, its different States in the preſent World; and *out of which*, he tells us, ſhall finally be *gathered All Offences, and they*

they which do iniquity: That Kingdom, which *God Thus* deſcribed of old to *Moſes*, Exod. xix. 6. *Ye ſhall be unto me a* Kingdom *of Prieſts, and an Holy Nation:* And the *Prophet Thus*, Pſ. xlv 6. *A Sceptre of Righteouſneſs is the Sceptre of thy Kingdom:* And the *heavenly Hoſt* in the *Revelation Thus*, ch. xii. 9, 10. *Now is come Salvation and Strength, and the* Kingdom *of our God*; for *That old Serpent ---- which deceiveth the whole World*, (that is, the Devil, the Spirit of Errour, the Spirit of Idolatry and Debauchery in All Nations,) *was caſt into the Earth*, (that is, was thrown down low, and deſtroyed,) *and his Angels were caſt out with him:* Laſtly, That Kingdom, which the *Apoſtle St* Paul tells us, *is not in Word, but in Power*; *is not Meat and Drink*, (Forms and Ceremonies,) *but Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.*

SERM. XV.

THIS, in the *New Teſtament*, is the frequent and uſual acceptation of this Phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*; It ſignifies the *State of the Goſpel*, or the eſtabliſhment of *true Religion* in the World.

SERM. XV.

From which Uſe of the Phraſe in Scripture, we may by the way obſerve, how greatly all ſuch *Enthuſiaſtick* perſons err, who under the Notion of the *Kingdom of God*, repreſent to themſelves either the *Saints* exerciſing *Temporal Authority and Dominion* in *This World*, or *God himſelf* influencing the Minds of Men by his *abſolute and irreſiſtible Power*. As to the former Notion, That of the *Saints* exerciſing *Temporal Authority and Dominion* in *This World*; in *This* Senſe, our Saviour has expreſsly declared, that his Kingdom is *not* of *This World*; And the True Proſperity of the Church of God, 'tis plain, does not at all conſiſt in the Increaſe of *Temporal Grandeur*, which tends always to corruption; but in the Increaſe of *True Holineſs and Virtue* only, in the Hearts and Lives of Men. And as to the *Other* Notion, That of *God's* influencing the Minds of Men by his *abſolute and irreſiſtible Power*; *This* alſo is a very erroneous apprehenſion concerning the manner of God's *ruling* over *Moral Agents*: For the True Greatneſs and Glory of a Prince reigning in his Kingdom,

dom, is the Willing *Obedience* of his Subjects, not their *Weakneſs and Incapacity of reſiſting him:* And in all things relating to *Religion and Morality*, 'tis not magnifying the Glory and Majeſty of God, to ſuppoſe *Him* acting upon and over-ruling mens *Wills* by his *Power*, but to ſuppoſe *Them* (like *reaſonable* creatures) *chuſing* to obey his Commands by their *Wills*, and *loving* the Practiſe of *Virtue and Goodneſs*. SERM. XV.

THIS therefore is the *uſual* Meaning of the *Kingdom of God* in Scripture: It denotes the *State of the Goſpel*, or the Prevalency of *True Religion* among Men.

NEVERTHELESS, ſince, at the Beſt, *all* that can *here* be done in this *imperfect* State towards eſtabliſhing God's Kingdom of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, and conſequently of True Happineſs among his Creatures: Since, I ſay, All that *can* be done towards theſe great Ends in this preſent *frail and imperfect* State, is *only in order* to a more *complete and perfect State* hereafter, when God ſhall have *put down all Rule and all Authority and Power*; and when *All Enemies*, *Satan*, and *Sin*, and *Death*, ſhall be entirely *deſtroyed*;

SERM. XV.

ſtroyed; and his *Saints* ſhall *reign* with him in *Glory* for ever: Therefore to *That future and perfect* State it is, that This phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*, always has *reference*, even when 'tis applied to the *ſtate of the Goſpel Here*: And *That Heavenly State* it is, which *ultimately and properly* is ſtiled *the Kingdom of God*; Wherein *the Righteous ſhall ſhine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father*; Into which Kingdom, *there ſhall in no caſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever loveth or maketh a Lye*; but they who *overcome*, (that is, they who ſo reſiſt the Temptations of Covetouſneſs, Ambition, and Senſual Pleaſure, as in the midſt of a degenerate and debauched World, to follow Truth, and Right, and Charity, fearing God, and keeping his Commandments;) *Theſe* ſhall *receive the Kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the World*, and (according to the gracious Promiſe of their Father) ſhall inherit it for ever. This *Heavenly State*, I ſay, it is, to which That phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*, always has *reference*, even when 'tis expreſsly applied to *the State of the Goſpel here*.

And

And 'tis with Great Propriety of expreſſion, that *Both* theſe States are, as well *ſeparately* as *jointly*, included under this *One* Denomination: They being indeed, not *Two diſtinct* States, but One the *continuation only* of the Other; differing from each other no otherwiſe, than as Seed-time from Harveſt, or as Childhood from the perfection of Man's eſtate: *Virtue*, and *Goodneſs*, and the *Love of God*, and *Obedience* to him at *preſent*, being the *Beginnings* of *Happineſs here*; and the *Glories of Heaven* hereafter being nothing elſe but the ſame *Virtue*, and *Goodneſs*, and *Love of God*, and *Obedience* to him, completed and made perfect *There*, by an aſſurance of his uninterrupted Favour and Preſence for ever. And This Notion, by the way, ſhows the extreme Folly and Abſurdity of All Thoſe, who (fundamentally erring from the Truth and Nature of Things,) found their *Religion here*, and their *expectations of Happineſs hereafter*, in any thing elſe (whatſoever it be) *diſtinct* from *Virtue*, and *Righteouſneſs*, and *Charity*, and *True Holineſs*; which things are, not only the *Characters* and *Marks* of, but they are them-

SERM. XV.

themſelves neceſſarily and immutably the *Very Eſſence* of the *Kingdom of God.*

FROM what has been hitherto ſaid in explication of this Phraſe ſo very frequently met with in the *New Teſtament*, it appears therefore, that there are *Three* Senſes, to which the full Notion of the *Kingdom of God* extends. There is his *Kingdom* of *Nature*, by which he ruleth with irreſiſtible Power, abſolutely over *All:* There is his *Kingdom* of *Grace* or *Virtue*; by which he reigneth in the *Hearts* of *Moral Agents*, who obey him *willingly* or of *Free Choice:* And there is his *Kingdom* of *Glory*; wherein he ſhall finally be for ever adored by Thoſe, who, through a Life of Virtue and True Holineſs, ſhall be found *meet to be Partakers of That Inheritance of the Saints in Light.*

AND according to theſe *ſeveral* ſenſes of the Phraſe, muſt the Petition in the Text, *Thy Kingdom come*, be in like manner underſtood, to extend to different Significations.

1. IN the *firſt* place, as to the Natural *Kingdom of God*; *This* indeed we cannot with *Any Propriety* pray that it *may come*, becauſe,

becauſe, by *Neceſſity of Nature*, it always *is*, and *cannot but be*, actually *preſent*. 'Tis *neceſſarily*, from *everlaſting* to *everlaſting*; a Kingdom of abſolute and irreſiſtible Power; without *Limits*, and without *Interruption*; In *all* Places alike, without diſtinction; and that cannot *come* at *one* Time, more than at *another*. Nevertheleſs, though the Kingdom of God, in *This* ſenſe, is what we cannot pray *may come*; yet we *may* and *ought* to rejoice in the Thoughts of its being always Preſent: *Pſ.* xcvii. 1. *The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice; let the multitude of the Iſles be glad thereof.* 'Tis matter of great and juſt ſatisfaction to reaſonable Minds, to conſider that the Government and Sovereignty of the Univerſe, the Alone Truly abſolute and uncontrolable Power, is in the hands of unerring Wiſdom and of perfect Goodneſs; and that things are not under the uncomfortable Dominion of Blind Chance, or of inexorable and unrelenting Fate. But

2*dly*, THAT therefore which our Saviour principally directs us to deſire and pray for in This Petition, is the eſtabliſhment

SERM. XV.

bliſhment of God's Kingdom of *Grace* or *Virtue*. That as his *Kingdom of* Nature ruleth *Always abſolutely* over All *things*, ſo his *Kingdom of* Grace or *Virtue* may *in due Time* be *univerſally* eſtabliſhed over its *proper Subjects*: As his *natural* Power is *abſolute and uncontrolable*, ſo his *ſpiritual* Dominion over the Hearts and Wills of rational Creatures, may *prevail* finally againſt all the Oppoſition of Sin and Satan: As his *Glory* eſſentially is *infinite* and *immutable*; ſo *relatively* alſo, it may in due time be promoted and acknowledged by all reaſonable Creatures. *This* is the *principal* ſenſe of our praying for the *Kingdom of God* to *come*. 'Tis expreſſing our earneſt Deſire, that the Goſpel of Chriſt, the true Religion of God, in its native and uncorrupted Simplicity, may ſpread and prevail over the whole Earth, as the *Waters cover the Sea*; and that *all the Kingdoms of the World may become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt*: May *become his Kingdoms*, not by conqueſt of Temporal Power, but by Perſwaſion and Force of Truth, by the Power

Power and Demonſtration of the Spirit. And that all they who *have* embraced the Goſpel in Profeſſion, may *let the Kingdom of God rule in their Hearts*, by *living* as *worthy* Subjects of it. For 'tis in the *willing Subjection* of the Mind to *Truth and Right*, and in the regulating conſequently all *Actions*, *Paſſions*, *Appetites*, *and Affections*, according to the Divine Laws; in *This* it is, that this *Kingdom of God* principally conſiſts. By his *Power*, he can *at* all *times* ſubdue all *things* unto himſelf; and by This irreſiſtible Dominion, the whole material unintelligent World is perpetually governed, and obeys it *neceſſarily*, without *any poſſibility* of *diſobeying*: But 'tis the *Will* of *God*, that *Intelligent* and *Rational* Beings ſhould not obey *his* Will, but by *their own*; ſhould not obey by *neceſſity of nature*, but by the *free Choice and unconſtrained Compliance* of the *Will*. The *material Univerſe* therefore, the whole *Frame of Nature* is ſubject to the Power of God; but reaſonable *Creatures only* are ſubject to his Laws. By This they become *accountable*, and *capable*

SERM. XV.

SERM. XV.

pable of being *judged:* By This, they are rendred either *acceptable* to him, and capable of *Reward*; or *obnoxious*, and *liable to* be *puniſhed.* This Trial, This Probation he puts upon them ſuitable to their rational Nature: And 'tis the *Perfection* of their *Nature*, and the *higheſt Improvement* of their *Virtue*, to *chuſe* to obey him *cheerfully and readily.* The more *excellent* the *Nature*, and the more *perfect* the *Virtue* of any *reaſonable Creature* is, the more does it delight in obeying the moſt perfect Will of God, who is *Perfection* and *Goodneſs itſelf.* For this reaſon, the *Angels in Heaven* are ſtiled in Scripture, by way of eminence, *thoſe Servants of His that do his Pleaſure.* And our Saviour, as it were by way of *explication* of this Petition, *Thy Kingdom come*, directs us to proceed in the following words, *Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven:* And elſewhere ſets before us, to the ſame End, *his Own* ſtill *more perfect* Example, *Joh.* iv. 34. *My* Meat *is to do the Will of Him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work.* But

3*dly*,

SERM. XV.

3*dly* and *Laſtly*, THERE is ſtill *another* ſenſe of this Petition, which was very much inſiſted on in the Primitive Church: And That is, that God's *Kingdom of* Glory might *come ſpeedily*; and that being *quickly* delivered from the Miſeries of this ſinful and corrupt World, they might *ſoon* attain to That *Bleſſed Hope* of the *Reſurrection from the Dead*. It was an Opinion which *prevailed generally* in thoſe early Ages, that at the Reſurrection every man ſhould ariſe *in Order* according to the *degree* of his Goodneſs; and that they who were raiſed and judged *firſt*, ſhould *themſelves* have a part in *judging* thoſe which followed. Whether there was *juſt ground* for this opinion, or not, I ſhall not here take upon me to determine: But the *Texts* on which they built it were theſe which follow; 1 *Cor.* xv. 23. *Every man in his own order*; *Chriſt*, *the Firſt-fruits*; *afterward they that are Chriſt's, at his coming: and Then cometh the end.* 1 Theſ. iv 16. *The dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt.* Rev. xx 6. *Bleſſed and holy is He that has part in the firſt Reſurrection.* 1 Pet. iv. 17. *Judgment*

SERM. XV.

ment must begin at the House of God. 1 Cor. vi. 2. *Do ye not know that the Saints shall judge the World?* ------ *and that we shall judge Angels?* Jude 14. *The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints to execute Judgment.* Matt. xix. 28. *Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel: And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting Life:* In St *Luke* it is, *shall receive manifold more in This Present time, and, in the World to come, Life everlasting,* ch. xviii. 30. Lastly, *Rev.* xx. 4. *I saw Thrones, and they sat upon them, and Judgment was given unto them; and I saw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and ---- they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* 'Tis remarkable, the Text

Text does not ſay, that *Chriſt* came down and reigned *upon Earth* a thouſand years; as Many have imagined without *Any* ground: But only that the Martyrs *reigned with Chriſt* a thouſand years; *whatever* be the meaning of that Prophetical, and perhaps figurative, period of Time. Theſe are the Texts upon which in the Primitive times was built That general Opinion, that at the Reſurrection every man ſhould ariſe *in Order* according to the *degree* of his Goodneſs; and which made them therefore in their Prayers petition for an early Reſurrection. Whether there was in the Texts ſufficient foundation for the Opinion in *This particular* or no, (which 'tis not at all needful for *Me* here to determine,) yet *in the general* 'tis certain, that they who lived in ſuch continual State of Perſecution as the Primitive Chriſtians did, and had ſuch a lively ſenſe as they always had upon their Minds of the Glory and Happineſs of Heaven, had very good reaſon to pray earneſtly and conſtantly, that the *Kingdom of God* (in this Laſt and moſt perfect Senſe of the phraſe)

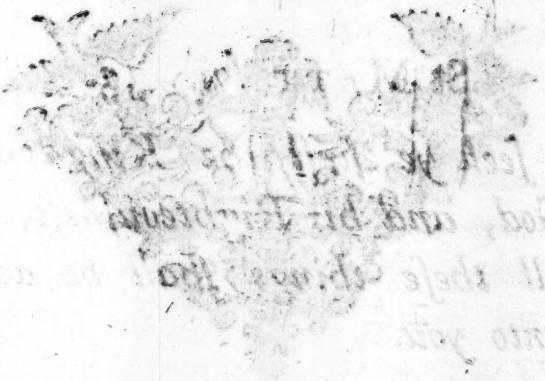
SERM. XV.

SERM. XV.

phraſe) might ſpeedily *come*; that it would pleaſe God *ſhortly to accompliſh the Number of his Elect, and to haſten his Kingdom:* According to that pathetick concluſion of the book of the *Revelation*, ch. xxii. 20. *He which teſtifieth theſe things, ſaith, Surely I come quickly: Amen; even ſo come, Lord Jeſus.* And though (God be Thanked) *We* are not *Now* under ſuch *continual* and ſuch *ſevere* Perſecution, as the *Primitive and Better* Chriſtians were; yet whoſoever has a juſt ſenſe of the *Vanity* and *Diſorders* of this *preſent* World, and the *Glory* of the World *to come*; whoſoever obſerves what St *Paul* foretels, 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. *Yea, and* All *that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus* ſhall *ſuffer perſecution*; and conſiders the Difficulties continually ariſing to *upright and ſincere* men in *Every* Station of Life, from the numerous Errors and Corruptions, evil Cuſtoms and debauched Practices, of an *ignorant, ſuperſtitious, and tyrannical* World; will ſee reaſon to think it *ſtill* and *ever*, a moſt natural and proper part of the Prayer of every Good

Chriſtian, that the *Kingdom of God may come*; even That *New Heavens and New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs.* SERM. XV.

To which, that we may All at length arrive, *God of his infinite Mercy grant*, &c.



SERMON XVI.

Of the KINGDOM *of* GOD.

St MATT. vi. 33.

But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.

OUR Saviour in the 24th verſe of this Chapter, warns his Diſciples of the abſolute Impoſſibility, of their being at the ſame time ſervants of God, and ſlaves to the pleaſures of this

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

preſent corrupt World. *No man*, ſays he, *can ſerve two Maſters*; No man can, at one and the ſame time obey two Perſons of a contrary diſpoſition; The Judgment and Affections of his Heart and Soul, cannot at once be fixt and ſettled, upon things of a different and inconſiſtent nature: *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other.* He muſt of neceſſity, by obeying the one, diſobey and neglect the other; and then, *his* Servant only he is, to whom he obeys. *Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*; ye cannot be truly religious and ſincere ſervants of God, while your Hearts and Affections are too intently and inſeparably fixt upon the vanities of the preſent ſinful World; For in all probability there *will* ſometime or other ariſe a competition between them; and then he that cannot part with thoſe injoyments of the World, which are inconſiſtent with his Religion, *muſt* neglect his duty towards God; and he that will upon no Account neglect his Duty towards God, muſt be content to part with all

all the contrary Intereſts in the preſent World. SERM. XVI.

THIS therefore being the caſe, that we cannot attend wholly to two contrary things at once; and that it cannot be imagined, but that one or the other of them muſt in many circumſtances and upon many occaſions be poſtponed; our Saviour proceeds to adviſe us, ver. 25, *which* of the two oppoſite Intereſts 'tis of the greateſt importance for us to ſecure. He admoniſhes us, that our main and principal Intentions ought always to be fixed upon our Chief, that is, our future Happineſs; without being unreaſonably and anxiouſly ſollicitous, concerning the tranſitory injoyments of this preſent life; *Therefore I ſay unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye ſhall put on.* With reſpect to the *Apoſtles*, to whom theſe words were more immediately directed, they are to be underſtood in the *ſtrict* and *literal* Senſe; that being in a perpetual Progreſs from one place to another to preach the Goſpel, they were not to make any proviſion at

SERM. XVI.

all for their own maintenance, but to rely entirely upon the Providence of God, by whoſe appointment they were imployed in that ſpiritual work. But as the words expreſs the duty of *Chriſtians at all times and in all places*, they muſt be underſtood in a larger and leſs ſtrict Senſe; to ſignify, that, after we have uſed a reaſonable induſtry to attain the neceſſaries of this preſent life, we ought not to be any further anxious and ſollicitous about them; but to rely on the Providence of God, for a continual ſupply of theſe things by his bleſſings upon our *juſt* Indeavours, and to be content with what proportion of them he is pleaſed to beſtow upon us in the ways of Righteouſneſs.

THE Reaſons or Arguments, *why* we ought thus contentedly to rely upon the Providence of God, our Saviour adds in the 25th and following verſes: *Is not the Life more than meat, and the Body than raiment?* He that firſt gave you Life and Being, without your contributing any thing towards it yourſelves; will he not much more beſtow upon you, in the

the ways of Virtue and Integrity, things neceſſary for the ſupport and preſervation of that Life? *Behold the fowls of the Air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*; they foreſee not their own Wants, nor are able to make any proviſion againſt them; *yet your heavenly Father feedeth them*; *Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye Thought for raiment*; *Conſider the Lillies of the Field how they grow*; *they toil not, neither do they ſpin*; *and yet* God gives them a continual increaſe, and clothes them with inimitable Beauty; ſo that *even Solomon himſelf in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe: Wherefore if God ſo clothe the graſs of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?*

AFTER which Reaſonings, he repeats again the admonition itſelf, ver. 31. *Therefore take no Thought, ſaying, What ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? (for after theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye*

SERM. XVI.

have need of all theſe things; (Which admonition, if it be applied, not to the then preſent circumſtances of the Apoſtle's only, but to all Chriſtians in general; it muſt be underſtood with ſome limitations in the ſenſe before explained;) And then he adds, in the Words of the Text, *But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

THE *Kingdom of God*, in Scripture-phraſe, ſignifies, ſometimes the Glory and Happineſs of *Heaven*; ſometimes the ſtate of the Goſpel, the eſtabliſhment of the Religion of Chriſt upon *Earth*; and very frequently *Both* of them together; they being in reality one and the ſame thing, differing only in time and in degree. For God carries on one uniform and regular deſign, of bringing all his Creatures to Righteouſneſs and Happineſs; and theſe are inſeparable the one from the other. Righteouſneſs is the only poſſible foundation of true Happineſs; and Happineſs is, both in the nature of things and by the appointment of God, the Fruit and the Effect of Righteouſneſs. They differ

differ only, as Seed-time and Harveſt, as Childhood and the State of a Man; *Grace or Virtue*, being the beginning, the ground and principle of *Happineſs*, growing up and improving towards the Perfection of *Glory*. The *Kingdom of God* therefore, when it ſignifies *Both*, is not uſed in different Senſes, but in its moſt proper and natural ſignification: On the contrary, when it ſeems reſtrained to *One* ſignification, it is *then rather* taken figuratively, and put only as a Part for the Whole. In the Text, it is of little importance in *which* of the two Senſes we underſtand it: For, if by the *Kingdom of God*, be meant the ſtate of the Goſpel or the Religion of Chriſt here; yet without doubt 'tis principally with regard to its final iſſue and perfection in Heaven: And if thereby be meant the Glory and Happineſs of Heaven, yet this always preſuppoſes the foregoing eſtabliſhment of true Righteouſneſs and Holineſs upon Earth. Or, they may ſeem *Both* to be expreſſed in theſe words of our Saviour, The *Kingdom of God* and *his Righteouſneſs*; the *Glory of Heaven*, and the

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

the *Way* that leads to it; the *End* to be ultimately aimed at, and the neceſſary and indiſpenſable *Means* of attaining it.

To *Seek* theſe things, is to value and eſteem them; to fix our Thoughts and Meditations upon them; to propoſe them to ourſelves as the moſt valuable End, towards which all our Actions ought to be directed; to be diligent in inquiring and ſtudying the Means, by which they may beſt be attained; and to be as zealous and hearty, as ſincere and ſteddy in our indeavours after them, as the *Gentiles*, i. e. as worldly men, are, in ſeeking after the Pleaſures and Profits, in purſuing the Intereſts and Injoyments of the preſent Life. This is to *ſeek* the *Kingdom of God*, and his *Righteouſneſs*: Uſing our utmoſt indeavours, imploying all our Powers and Faculties, to promote the Intereſt of true Religion and the Practice of Virtue among Men, which is the beginning of the *Kingdom of God* on *Earth*; in order to ſecure to Ourſelves and Others a portion in that eternal ſtate of Happineſs, which

is

is the final eſtabliſhment of his *Kingdom* in *Heaven.* SERM. XVI.

SEEK ye *firſt*; i. e. ſeek theſe things *before*, and in *preference to* all other things; ſeek them with greater diligence and more earneſt labour, with ſteddier zeal and with a warmer affection, with greater care and deeper concern, with a more conſtant and unwearied application: Seek them as things of greater moment, even of infinite importance; ſo as in competition always to prefer them clearly before all other Intereſts and Deſigns whatſoever: Conſidering that there is no proportion between things finite and infinite, no compariſon between things temporal and eternal: that it will be unſpeakably a greater Happineſs to be judged worthy of the meaneſt portion of that eternal inheritance, where *neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and ſteal*, than to be put in poſſeſſion of all the ſhort-lived empires of this World, and of all thoſe tranſitory Riches, which of themſelves moulder away in few years into that duſt from whence they were originally taken: that

SERM. XVI.

that 'tis *even here* infinitely a greater pleaſure to *ſave a Soul from Death by converting a Sinner from the Error of his Ways*, than Senſual and Voluptuous Perſons ever find in the higheſt gratifications of Senſe, or worldly minds in the poſſeſſion and injoyment of the largeſt Treaſures.

SEEK ye *firſt* the Kingdom of God; *i. e.* not ſo as wholly to exclude the care of other things; For That is impoſſible in this preſent Life, and to pretend to it, is but Enthuſiaſm, and hinders the ſpreading of true Religion: But ſeek *this* chiefly and in the firſt place; Make *this* your principal and main care; Suffer nothing to interfere or come in competition with it: Do this *above* and *before* all other things, and yet other things need not to be left undone. The very Command itſelf of ſeeking this *firſt*, implies that other things alſo may be ſought *afterwards*; that other things likewiſe may be taken care for, in their proper *place* and *ſubordinate* Rank; with a due and moderate degree of affection, ſuch as may always be conſiſtent with this ultimate

ultimate and great design. And with *This Limitation*, if not to the *Apostles themselves*, yet at least so far as they can be a general precept to *all Christians at all times*, must the Words (as I before hinted) of necessity be understood. SERM. XVI.

THE Words being thus explained, we may observe in them these three things:

I. A *Precept*, or the *Duty* commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.*

II. THE *manner* and *degree* of the Obligation, *Seek it first.*

III. THE *Promises* even of a *temporal Reward* annexed. *And all these things shall be added unto you.*

I. THERE is in the Words a *Precept*, or the *Duty* commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* And here without doubt, there is no Man who with any the least degree of Sincerity calls himself by the Name of Christian, but *professes* and *thinks* that he seeks the Kingdom of God. The very title and profession of a Christian, implies as much as his being a Candidate for Heaven;

SERM. XVI.

ven; And ſo long as he continues a member of the Church of Chriſt *here*, he is apt to believe that he retains his title, and is going forwards towards his inheritance in the glory that ſhall be revealed *hereafter*; eſpecially if he be conſtant in his outward Profeſſion; if he be zealous for Notions which perhaps he underſtands not, and which tend not much to influence practice; and if he be diligent in attending the external rites and ſervices of Religion. But 'tis obſervable that our Saviour tells us, St *Luk.* xiii. 24. that there are *many* that ſeek *to enter in*, who *ſhall not be able*; And in the expreſſion of the Text itſelf he plainly enough intimates, that Men may *in vain* ſeek the Kingdom of God, if they ſeek it not according to the righteouſneſs thereof. Since therefore there *is* ſuch a thing as *Seeking* without *Effect*; and to fall finally ſhort of what we profeſs to Seek for, is at leaſt an equal, perhaps a greater Miſery, than never to have ſought after it at all; it cannot but be a Subject worthy our moſt ſerious Conſideration, to inquire into the full meaning and extent

tent of this precept of our Saviour; which unqueſtionably is not obeyed in its true Senſe, unleſs we *ſo Seek* as to be able to *Find*. St *Paul*, 1 *Cor*. ix. 24. compares the life of a Chriſtian to a *Race*, wherein *they that run, run all, but one receiveth the prize*; and thereupon he exhorts his *Corinthians ſo* to run, that they might *obtain*. In like manner our Saviour in the Text, when he commands us to ſeek the Kingdom of God, and directs us to ſeek it in the way of righteouſneſs, and elſewhere warns us that many who ſeek it ſhall not be able to find it; he cannot but be underſtood as exhorting us to ſeek it earneſtly and effectually and in *ſuch* a manner, as that we may not finally fail to attain it. SERM. XVI.

FOR our clearer direction therefore in obeying this precept, 'tis to be obſerved, that ſeeking any thing ſincerely and effectually, implies in it the following particulars.

1. HAVING a juſt *value and true eſteem*, for the thing we profeſs to ſeek after. For the deſires and indeavours after any object, muſt of neceſſity always be

SERM. XVI.

be proportionable, not to the real and intrinſick value of the thing itſelf, but to the degree of the *impreſſion* it makes upon our mind, and of the affection it conſequently excites in it. There are great numbers of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, who though they are afraid indeed of the puniſhment of Hell, and cannot bear the terror of eternal torments; (which makes them therefore not dare to be openly profane;) yet they have no real Eſteem for the ſtate of Heaven, no earneſt deſire after that Happineſs, which conſiſts in the likeneſs of God and in the Perfection of Virtue. To prevent the ill Effects of which Remiſsneſs, the Scripture uſes great variety of Arguments, to excite in us a juſt Regard and true Value, for the greatneſs of that Happineſs, which God has vouchſafed to prepare for them that love and obey him; repreſenting it to us under the Notion of a *Pearl* of ſuch great price, that that Perſon is ſpoken of as acting very wiſely, who immediately ſold all that he had to purchaſe it; under the ſimilitude of a *Crown* that never fades;

of

of a *Kingdom* that will continue for ever; of a *Prize* which no Labour can be too much in contending for; of a *Glory* ſhining forth as the Sun, as the Brightneſs of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever; of a *Treaſure* that can never waſte, nor be diminiſhed either by violence or fraud; of *fulneſs of joy* without intermiſſion, and *pleaſures* that will laſt for evermore; of *ſeeing the Face* of God, and being made like unto him, and being aſſured of his Love and Favour for ever. And yet all theſe are but figurative expreſſions, Compariſons, and very imperfect repreſentations; For, after all that is or can be ſaid, yet *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.* In which *One* elegant Image there is contained *much Variety* under a moſt beautiful Gradation. Great is the Diverſity of glorious Objections which entertain the *Eye* in contemplating the beautiful Order and exquiſite proportion of the Works of God; and yet this is far exceeded by the hearing

SERM. XVI.

of the Ear, and by the larger compaſs of Other men's obſervations joyned with our own. Many are the Glories which the *Ear* hath heard of, in the deſcription of all parts of the World at preſent, and in the Hiſtories of the Ages that have paſt before us; and yet theſe likewiſe are ſtill far excelled, by what the Heart of man is able to conceive, and the Mind can repreſent to itſelf in the Imaginations of the Thoughts. Vaſtly great, and even unlimited are the Glories, which a vigorous and comprehenſive *Imagination* can frame to itſelf as poſſible; and yet even theſe likewiſe (ſays the Apoſtle) are as far excelled by the glory that ſhall be revealed in the *Kingdom of God*, as the Seeing of the Eye is by the Hearing of the Ear, or the Hearing of the Ear by the Imagination of the Heart. But becauſe theſe things after all are in their own nature *ſpiritual*, and can only be *ſpiritually diſcerned*; 'tis ſtill a matter of conſiderable Difficulty, and requires frequent and ſerious Meditation, to poſſeſs our minds with a juſt value and due eſteem of them; which is abſolutely neceſſary

ceſſary, in order to our ſeeking them worthily, and with that earneſtneſs and diligence they deſerve. The Affections muſt be drawn off from vain Imaginations, and the Mind reconciled to the Love of Truth and Goodneſs: We muſt *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, as our Saviour expreſſes it; or, in the Pſalmiſt's Phraſe, *thirſt after* it, even *as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks.* Otherwiſe, what wonder is it that men fall ſhort of the Kingdom of God, both here and hereafter; that they attain not to its Righteouſneſs here, and to the Glory of it hereafter; if their Deſires after it be weak, their indeavours careleſs, and they *ſeek* it as if they ſought it not?

SERM. XVI.

2. SEEKING any thing heartily and effectually, implies that we *fix our Attention* continually, *i.e.* habitually upon it. 'Tis not ſufficient that our judgment be convinced of the importance and neceſſity of Religion, unleſs our Paſſions and Affections likewiſe be in ſome meaſure intereſted. Nor is it enough that our Affections be moved once or ſeldom, but our zeal muſt be renew'd by frequent meditation.

SERM. XVI.

ditation. *We muſt give earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leaſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip*, Heb. ii. 1. For, as in matters of Senſe, Objects at a diſtance appear ſmall and imperfect; and nothing but reaſoning and judgment, can correct the errors and deceptions of the Sight; ſo in matters of Religion and of ſpiritual concern, nothing but frequent conſideration and earneſt and ſerious meditation, can repreſent thoſe things as *preſent* to us, ſo as to cauſe them to make vigorous and laſting impreſſions upon our Minds, which yet we all know *cannot be* very far *diſtant* from Us: For *Death* is not remote from the longeſt Liver in this tranſitory World; and *That* conveys us if not immediately, yet without any farther Change of our State, it conveys us unto Judgment. To prevent our Attention being diverted from theſe things, the Apoſtles are perpetually exhorting us, to raiſe our thoughts from the Vanities of this tranſitory and uncertain World, to the Glories of that Heavenly and eternal Kingdom which we profeſs to ſeek as our ultimate End: to *ſet*

our

our affections on things above, not on things in the Earth. And our Saviour in his Parable of the Sower warns us, how the Word of the Kingdom, notwithſtanding the unſpeakable Weight and Importance of it, may yet very poſſibly make no more impreſſion on the Minds of careleſs and inconſiderate Perſons, than Seed caſt upon the hard high-way can enter into the Earth and grow; or if the Word preached *does* make ſome impreſſion at firſt, yet that it may eaſily be drowned by the Cares and Buſineſs and Pleaſures of a corrupt World, as Corn is choked and over-run, by a multitude of Weeds. And This without queſtion is the true Reaſon, why in ſo great a number of Chriſtians who ſeem in ſpeculation to believe the great doctrines of Religion, and profeſs zealouſly to ſeek the Kingdom of God; yet in reality theſe things have little more influence upon their Lives and Practice, than a Demonſtration of any Truth laid aſide and neglected after it has once been underſtood; or than a paſſage of a Hiſtory, forgotten after it has been once read; than a Dream,

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

when one awaketh; or than a paſt Thought that is never recollected. This ſort of Perſons, are excellently deſcribed by *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxiii. 31. *They come unto thee, as my people cometh, and they ſit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their Covetouſneſs. And lo, thou art to them as a very lovely ſong, of one that has a pleaſant voice, and can play well on an inſtrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*

3. SEEKING any thing heartily and effectually, implies, that we be *diligent and impartial in inquiring after the beſt and moſt certain means of attaining it.* He that in earneſt ſeeks the Kingdom of God, muſt not be bent upon chooſing his own ways and doing his own pleaſure, upon gratifying his own inclinations and indulging his own Paſſions; but on the contrary muſt reſolve to ſubmit entirely to the Will of God, to embrace Truth where-ever he finds it, and to be always ſincere in the Search after it. *Truſt in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine*

thine own Underſtanding, Prov. iii. 5. Zeal without Knowledge, Heat in the Paſſions without Light in the Underſtanding, is like travelling in a wrong road; which the faſter a man goes, and the further he proceeds in it, the farther he is from his journey's End, and with the greater difficulty will he return into the Way that truly leads to it. The firſt Diſpoſition neceſſary in him that with Effect would *ſeek* the Kingdom of God, is, that with a Meek and Unprejudiced Mind he conſider and ſtudy the *Means* by which God has directed him to obtain it, and with ſimplicity and purity of Intention receive the *ingrafted Word, which is able to ſave his Soul:* following the Example of Holy *David*, whoſe ſtudy all the day long was in the Law of God, and in the night-ſeaſon alſo he meditated on the ſame. For Want of this deſire of true inſtruction it is, that ſo many blind Superſtitions, ſo many abſurd unintelligible Doctrines, and ſo many unreaſonable Practiſes, have in ſeveral Ages of the World crept in under pretenſe and in the room of Religion; ma-

SERM. XVI.

king void the plaineſt Reaſon of Things and the moſt expreſs Commandment of God, through the Corruptions and Diſputes of Men; and fulfilling that Prophecy of our Saviour, that many ſhould *ſeek to enter in*, (ſeeking in vain and wrong ways, in ways of their own inventing and agreeable to their own corrupt affections,) many ſhould in this manner *ſeek* to enter in, *and ſhould not be able.* The only ſafe, certain, and general direction, by which perſons of all capacities may guide themſelves in this matter, in the midſt of a divided and contentious World, is to adhere ſtedfaſtly to the *two great Rules* which God has given us to walk by; *viz.* never allowing ourſelves in any Action contrary to our *Reaſon* and Conſcience, which (as the Wiſe man elegantly expreſſes it) is the *Candle of the Lord*; or contrary to *Scripture*, which is the brighter and clearer Light of Revelation. And herein we muſt firſt take care, not to fail in the *foundation*; in thoſe *plain* and *certain* things, wherein no man can innocently miſtake, but *he that runs may read them*;

in

in thoſe great commandments, thoſe weightier matters of the Law, the Love of God and of our Neighbour: and then we may with more ſafety proceed to conſider the *Superſtructure*, of doctrines *more* ſpeculative and *leſs* certain, of rites *more* difficult and of *leſs* importance. But for any man who is profane and a blaſphemer of the Name of God, who is unjuſt and unrighteous towards his Neighbour, or who lives in the Habitual Practiſe of Intemperance and Debauchery; for ſuch an One to pretend to *ſeek* zealouſly the Kingdom of God, in matters of external form, or in contending for Laws and Doctrines of Men, is like labouring to ſet in order the garments upon a *dead* Body; or like watering a Plant, whoſe very roots are dead. 'Tis contending about the *Name* of Religion, where the *Thing* is not; and for the *Shadow*, where there is no *Subſtance*. And here comes in that great and never-failing Rule of our Saviour, *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them*. Whoever is more concerned for particular Forms and Ceremonies, for Doctrines of a Sect or Party, for Dominion

SERM. XVI.

Dominion over other men's Conſciences, for any thing that depends on temporal Authority, than for the Diſcovery of Truth and the Practice of Virtue; very ſure we may be, that That Man's religion is Vain.

4*thly* and *laſtly*, SEEKING any thing heartily, ſincerely, and effectually, implies, that we immediately *Practice and put in Execution*, what we are once ſatisfied is the true Means to obtain it. Reſting in the ſpeculative part of Religion, is as if a man ſhould hope to arrive at his journey's end, merely by inſtructing himſelf in the knowledge of the Way. No: He that in earneſt *ſeeks the Kingdom of God*, muſt not only know and underſtand, but muſt in the courſe of his Life put in *Practice* alſo the *Righteouſneſs thereof*. *Though I ſpeak* (ſaith St *Paul*) *with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal: and though I have the gift of Prophecy and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove mountains, and have not*

no Charity, it profiteth me nothing. The *Phariſees* underſtood, the *Scribes* diſputed well about the Law; and *many* at the day of judgment ſhall ſay, *Lord, have we not taught in thy ſtreets, and in thy name done many wonderful works*; and yet he will ſay unto them, *I know you not*; *depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity*: For, not he that *knows*, but he only that *does* righteouſneſs, *is righteous*. And this is evidently the Work, not of a few hours, but of a whole life: So that they who put off their Repentance to their Death-bed, far from ſeeking *firſt*, do plainly ſeek only in the *laſt* place *the Kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*: i. e. they are the greateſt neglecters and deſpiſers of it: And conſequently they ſhall be leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; *i. e.* in Scripture-Phraſe, far ſhall they be from ever arriving there. Which brings me to the IId thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, *viz.* the *manner and degree* of the Obligation; *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

SERM. XVI.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

Of the KINGDOM *of* GOD.

MATT. vi. 33.

But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.

'TIS a very lively and affecting deſcription of Providence, which our Saviour gives us in his excellent diſcourſe to his Diſciples in this chapter: That our *heavenly Father knoweth what things*

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

things we have need of before we ask him; and is at all times able and willing to ſupply us with what his infinite Wiſdom knows to be needful and convenient for us; that not only *men* who are endued with reaſon and forecaſt, and have the advantage of their own labour and induſtry; but even the *Ravens* and *Fowls of the Air*, *which neither ſow nor reap, which neither have ſtorehouſe nor barn*, have yet a plentiful proviſion made for them, and are continually fed by his bountiful Providence: Yet not *a Sparrow*, one of the meaneſt of Birds, *falls to the ground without* him, *i. e.* without his direction or permiſſion; *not one of them*, as St *Luke* expreſſes it, *is forgotten before God*: That not only Creatures endued with Life and Senſe, but ſtill further, even the *Graſs* and Flowers of the Field, which can contribute nothing towards their own ſupport, nor are at all ſenſible of what is done for them, have yet in them more and greater marks of the inimitable workmanſhip of the great Creator of all things, than ever the Courts of the greateſt Princes, even that

of

of *Solomon* himſelf, had of humane arti- SERM. XVII.
fice and earthly glory: Nay, further, that even things of a ſtill lower degree than either Plants or Animals, thoſe very things which of all others ſeem to us the leaſt valuable and leaſt to be regarded, even *theſe* are not beneath the care and inſpection of Providence, but the very *hairs of our heads are all numbred* before God.

THE Uſe our Saviour makes of this lively Deſcription of Providence, is to teach us to rely at all times upon the Care and Protection of God, without unreaſonable anxiety, diffidence, and diſtruſt. And indeed, were not the noble Subject careleſly and inconſiderately paſſed over in mens thoughts, without attention and ſerious meditation; or were there not ſecretly in the breaſts of men, *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, it is not poſſible but this excellent Argument would generally produce in the Minds and Lives of men, its juſt and natural effect. Men who ſtudy and contemplate the *Phænomena* of *Nature*, which are the Works of God, the further they carry their

SERM. XVII.

their inquiries, and the deeper diſcoveries they make, the More, and the more undeniable Evidences they perpetually find, that the Works of Nature are not the Blunders of Chance, or the blind Effect of Unintelligent Fate; but the continual Operations of God who governs all things, by the uninterrupted care and interpoſition of an All-wiſe Providence, which *neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps*, and from whoſe direction nothing is exempted, at any time or in any place. Chriſtians, who according to their Profeſſion, believe the *Scriptures*, find our Saviour in the paſſages now recited, declaring fully and in few words this great Truth, confirming it by his Divine Authority, to thoſe who have not capacities or opportunities of obſerving it in the nature of the things themſelves; and making infinitely a better improvement of it, to cauſe us to put our Truſt worthily in God who governs all things, than ever was made by any of the Philoſophers in any Age of the World: *If God*, ſaith he, *ſo feeds the Birds of the Air, and clothes the Graſs of the Field*; how

how much more will he take care of *you,* SERM. XVII.
O ye of little Faith?

BUT our Saviour's Argument does not end here: The conſideration of the Care of Providence over us, teaches us to truſt in God for a ſupply of all things neceſſary *here*; and This our Truſt in him for things neceſſary *here*, is in order to enable us with greater earneſtneſs and leſs diſtraction of Thought, to attend upon the one thing neceſſary, the ſecuring our portion in the eternal Happineſs of the Kingdom of God *hereafter*: That our Hearts being weaned from an over-fond Love and Affection for the tranſitory enjoyments of this preſent World, may be *there* more ſurely and ſteddily fixed, where is laid up our true and laſting treaſure; even *that treaſure in the Heavens that faileth not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupteth. Take no thought therefore,* ſays our Lord; *i. e.* be not eager and ſollicitous, anxiouſly and unreaſonably careful, for theſe things which the *Nations of the World ſeek after*, even the *Gentiles which know not God: But* rather *ſeek ye the Kingdom*

SERM. XVII.

of God; ſo it is expreſſed in St *Luke*; or in the words of the Text, *Seek ye* firſt *the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs: You*, ſaith he, who have the Happineſs to *know God*, and to whom his Glory has been particularly revealed; *you* who are bleſſed with the knowledge of his true Religion, of the Purity and Excellency of his divine Laws, and the great and eternal Reward which will attend the Practice of them; Live *ye* ſuitably to ſo excellent a Belief, and anſwerably to ſo great a degree of Knowledge: Let *your* affections be raiſed above things earthly and temporal, to thoſe which are ſpiritual, heavenly, and eternal; *Seek ye* firſt *the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*; and all theſe things, theſe earthly and temporal bleſſings, ſo far as the Wiſdom of God ſees neceſſary for your preſent comfortable ſubſiſtence, *ſhall be added unto you.*

IN a foregoing Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I obſerved in them theſe three things:

I. A

I. A Precept or Duty commanded; *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs.*

II. THE manner and degree of the Obligation; *Seek it* firſt.

III. THE Promiſe even of a *temporal* Reward annexed; *And all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

I. IN diſcourſing upon the Precept or Duty commanded; *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*; I obſerved, that Seeking any thing heartily and effectually, implies theſe four things:

1*ſt*, THAT we have a juſt *value and eſteem* for the thing we pretend to ſeek after.

2*dly*, THAT we *fix our Attention* continually, *i. e.* habitually upon it.

3*dly*, THAT we be *diligent and impartial in inquiring after the beſt and certaineſt means* of attaining it. And

4*thly*, THAT we *immediately practiſe thoſe Means, and heartily put them in Execution.* And theſe I have already enlarged upon.

SERM. XVII.

I proceed now in the II*d* place, to conſider the particular *manner and degree* of our Obligation to this Duty; contained in the *comparative* expreſſion, Seek ye *firſt*, or (as 'tis expreſſed in St *Luke*,) Seek ye *rather* the Kingdom of God. And here (as I before took notice in the Explication of the Text,) it is reaſonable to obſerve, that the Word *firſt* or *rather*; as in the *comparative* Senſe it *heightens* the Obligation of the Duty, and ſignifies that we are bound to ſeek the Kingdom of God *more heartily*, *more earneſtly*, *more zealouſly*, with *greater conſtancy*, with *greater diligence*, with *ſtronger and more intenſe affections*, than can reaſonably be employed about any temporal concern; ſo, on the contrary, in the *abſolute* Senſe, 'tis a *relaxation* or *diminution* of the ſtrictneſs and rigour of the Duty; ſignifying, that we are not obliged to ſeek the Kingdom of God *wholly* and *only*, in a *total and abſolute* excluſion of all other deſires, (as ſome melancholy well-diſpoſed perſons may be apt to imagine;) but only that we are to ſeek it *chiefly* and in the *firſt* place;

place; as being infinitely of more value and of greater importance to us, and conſequently infinitely worthier of our higheſt care and concern than any temporal and worldly affairs. But the very Word itſelf, Seek this *firſt*, implies in the proper notion of it, that *other* things alſo may be deſired *afterward*, i. e. in their due place, and with a ſubordinate affection. The Words immediately foregoing, *Take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed*, ſeem indeed to be ſpoken abſolutely and without reſtriction: And perhaps to the Apoſtles themſelves, the immediate Hearers of this Diſcourſe of our Lord, who were to have no ſettled habitation or abode, but were to preach the Goſpel from one Nation and Kingdom to another; to *them* poſſibly this inſtruction was *intended* ſo to be underſtood, in the abſolute and unreſtrained Senſe. But as the Circumſtances of Chriſtians in following times, neceſſarily made the ſtrict and literal Senſe of thoſe words altogether impracticable; ſo the Words of the Text im-

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

mediately following them, evidently give us room to interpret them in ſuch a manner, as to be a prohibition *only* of *immoderate* and *exceſſive* Cares; of *ſuch* Cares and Sollicitude for the things of the World, as is unworthy of the Character, and inconſiſtent with the Zeal and Diligence of thoſe whoſe Heart and whoſe Treaſure is in Heaven. 'Tis not forbidden us to deſire and to uſe moderately the things of the World; but we muſt with our *firſt* and *greateſt* care, ſeek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs.

THE *Limitations* therefore of this Duty, or the particular *Degree and Manner* of the Obligation expreſſed in the Text, may be ſet forth in the following particulars.

1*ſt*, SEEKING in the *firſt* place the Kingdom of God, ſignifies, in the leaſt and loweſt ſenſe, that we muſt *not delay and put off to the future* our deſigns and intentions of living religiouſly. The Apoſtles were obliged, when they were firſt called by our Saviour, to leave all that they had and follow him; and we find

find that ſome who deſired only to take leave of their Friends, or to have time but for the burial of a neareſt Relation, were not allowed the indulgence even of ſo ſhort a delay. The Perſon who when he was commanded by our Saviour to *follow him, anſwered readily, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me firſt go bid them farewell which are at home at my houſe*, St *Luk.* ix. 61, was told, that *no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God:* The expreſſion 'tis plain is *figurative*; but the Senſe is, He who, when he is convinced of the Truth of Religion, is not willing *immediately* to comply with the Obligations thereof, but deſires ſtill a longer and a little longer delay, is not worthy to be admitted to injoy the benefit of it at all. And this refuſal to allow of any delay, was at a time when our Lord himſelf had not where to lay his Head; and when the Circumſtances of things were ſuch, that no man could become a Diſciple of Chriſt, but he muſt neceſſarily part with not only the *ſinful*, but even all the

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

innocent alſo and moſt allowable enjoyments and comforts of Life; at a Time when a man that had kept all the commandments from his Youth, according to the uſual extent and interpretation of the Law, was diſmiſſed by our Saviour with a very ſevere intimation of the danger even of not-ill-gotten poſſeſſions; becauſe he was not willing to *ſell all that he had, and give to the poor:* In a word, when no man could embrace the Chriſtian Religion, but he muſt at the ſame time reſolve to loſe all that he had, and very probably even his life itſelf alſo for the ſake of the Goſpel. How much more *Now*, when God is pleaſed to require of us a much eaſier Obedience; when we are required, not to part with *all* that we have, but only to retrench our vain and ſinful expences; not to ſell *all* and give to the Poor, but to be charitable out of the Superfluities of our plenty and abundance; not to lay down our *lives*, or leave even the *comfortable Enjoyments* of life, but only to forſake the unreaſonable and unfruitful Pleaſures of Sin, the Madneſs and Follies of Profuſeneſs,

fuſeneſs, the unprofitable Gains of Unrighteouſneſs, the hurtful and miſchievous extravagancies of Intemperance, the malicious and unmanly pleaſures of Pride and Arbitrarineſs, of Oppreſſion, Uncharitableneſs, and Revenge: *How much more*, I ſay, *in theſe days*, when God is pleaſed to exact of us only ſo eaſy an Obedience; *how much more* unreaſonable is it, that men ſhould *delay* complying with ſo good, ſo gentle, ſo neceſſary an Obligation? *How much more* unreaſonable is it that men ſhould *firſt* deſire to ſatisfy themſelves with the enjoyments of Sin, and then hope to mock God by *at laſt* deſiring to enter into his Kingdom? And how unworthy muſt they needs be *at the End of their lives* to be admitted into his Kingdom, who would not be perſwaded to employ the *beginning and beſt* of their days in ſeeking the Righteouſneſs thereof? 'Tis no advantage to God if we are righteous and obedient to him, nor is there any acceſſion made to *his* Self-ſufficient Happineſs, by *our* becoming Subjects of his Kingdom: 'Tis for our *own* benefit only, that he commands to do Righte- SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

Righteouſneſs; and therefore, if we ſlight and neglect and careleſly let ſlip the opportunities of preparing and qualifying ourſelves to be members of his Kingdom, 'tis very juſt in *him* to exclude us therefrom. Not that any man, when he firſt comes to a true ſenſe of Religion, how late ſoever it be, hath reaſon abſolutely to deſpair; but that thoſe who are better inſtructed in their early days, ſhould have no incouragement to defer their Obedience.

2*dly*, SEEKING *firſt* the Kingdom of God, ſignifies, that though our *actual* intention may often lawfully be imployed upon the things of the World, yet our *habitual*, *principal*, and *greateſt* regard muſt always be fixt upon the Life that is to come. I have *before* ſhown, that *ſeeking any thing heartily and effectually*, neceſſarily implies, among other things, that we *fix our attention continually*, i. e. *frequently and habitually upon it*. And now to apply this, in the *comparative* Senſe, to the Precept in the Text; 'Tis manifeſt, that ſeeking the Kingdom of God *firſt*, or *before* the things of the World,

World, neceſſarily implies, that even *while* we are imployed in worldly affairs, in providing for the preſent neceſſaries of life; yet our principal and main Intention muſt always habitually be directed towards our Ultimate and Great End. *Whatſoever thou takeſt in hand*, (as the wiſe Son of *Sirach* excellently expreſſes it,) *remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs*, Ecclus. vii. 36. Thus a Traveller may imploy his *immediate and preſent* Thoughts upon the conveniencies of his journey and the accommodations at his Inn; but yet at the ſame time, his *principal and chief* View will continually be upon the End of his Journey, and his ſafe arrival at home; and all other things will in courſe be directed with a ſubordination to That chief Deſign. And in *this* Senſe, a man may be *at all times* ſeeking the Kingdom of God; without any way neglecting, or at all withdrawing himſelf from ſecular Buſineſs: Which was the original Error of thoſe who firſt ran into the Superſtition of a Monkiſh retirement; and, in order (as they weakly thought) to

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

to become more religious towards *God*, put themſelves out of all capacity of doing any good amongſt *Men*. There is no imployment wherein a man may not perpetually be doing ſomething for the Honour of God, for the Good of Men, or for the Improvement of the Virtues of his own Mind: There is no Buſineſs, nay, there is no innocent Diverſion, wherein he may not make it his chief and conſtant care to act always like a reaſonable man and a good Chriſtian. There is no ſtate of life wherein he may not keep a conſtant Eye upon a future ſtate, and ſo uſe the things of the preſent World, as that the great and ultimate ſcope of all his Actions may always reſpect that which is to come: He may ſtedfaſtly propoſe to himſelf one great deſign of his life, and endeavour to act always regularly upon that Deſign: He may conſtantly fix his main Intention upon his chief and ultimate End; and in every thing he does, be careful always to maintain a juſt regard to That. Every thing he undertakes may be either directly conducive to that End,

or

or at leaſt *not contrary to and inconſiſtent* with it. Which Method of acting, *ſanctifies* all the *Buſineſs*, nay, even all the *Pleaſures* and *Diverſions* of life. And this is the SERM. XVII.

3*d* THING, which the Phraſe, (Seeking *firſt* the Kingdom of God,) neceſſarily implies, namely, that whenever there ariſes a *competition* between the Intereſt of Religion and that of the World, we always *prefer* the more important ſpiritual and eternal Intereſt, before any temporal and worldly concern. *If any man come to Me*, ſaith our Saviour, *Luk.* xiv. 26. *and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple*; If he *hate* not Father and Mother, is, in modern language, a very harſh expreſſion: But the meaning is, (according to the well-known Uſe of ſuch ways of ſpeaking among the *Jews*,) if he be not willing to part with *them*, when there is a Neceſſity ſo to do, rather than with his *Religion*. So our Saviour himſelf explains it, St *Matt.* x. 37, *He that loveth Father or Mother* more

SERM. XVII.

more *than Me, is not worthy of me;* — *and he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* We have reaſon to bleſs God we are not *now* called to ſo ſevere a trial; neither are we required to part with *all things* for his ſake, as the Diſciples in the primitive times were obliged to do: But we are *at all times* under the ſame Obligation to be in *Readineſs* to loſe all, to have an *indifferency* for the things of the World *comparatively* to our Religion; and to be habitually in ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as to be *always willing* to part with whatſoever ſhall at any time come in competition with our Duty. And of this there *are* Trials, even in our preſent circumſtances, by which Men *may* judge, in great meaſure, of their own Sincerity or Inſincerity in this particular. For inſtance; If a man, rather than deny himſelf the unlawful and unreaſonable pleaſure of a Debauch; if, rather than part with the unjuſt gains of Fraud and Deceit, of Oppreſſion and unrighteous Judgment; if, rather than reſtrain the fooliſh and unfruitful Vanity

of a profane Jeſt, of mockery and ſcoffing at Religion; he is willing *Now* to lay aſide all his hopes of Heaven; (as every vicious man plainly does, notwithſtanding his profeſſion of Chriſtianity;) ſuch a perſon may very eaſily judge, *how* ready he would be to leave *all*, even the *innocent* injoyments of life, and even *life itſelf*, for the ſake of that Religion which he *now* ſo ſlightly and upon every trivial an occaſion openly diſhonours. *He* indeed who *now* plucks out a *right eye*, or cuts off a *right hand*, who reſiſts great temptations of unrighteouſneſs, and, by the ſpirit of Religion, mortifies violent Paſſions and ſtrong corrupt inclinations; ſuch a one may reaſonably pretend, and has good evidence, has juſt ground of hope within himſelf, that if it ſhould pleaſe God to call him to ſo ſevere a trial, he *ſhould* be able to lay down even his life for his Religion. But if a man be not faithful in that which is *leaſt*, if he cannot prevail with himſelf to go through the *ſmalleſt* difficulty, what ground has he to pretend, that he would be faithful in that which

SERM. XVII.

is

SERM. XVII. is *much*, and undergo the *ſevereſt and moſt difficult* trial?

IN theſe particulars ſeem to be contained the full meaning and intention of the Precept, Seek ye *firſt* the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs.

IT remains that I proceed briefly in the

IIId and laſt place; TO conſider the Promiſe annexed even of a temporal reward; *and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* Now

FROM this Promiſe we may ſeem reaſonably to infer theſe three things.

I. THAT, *generally* ſpeaking, God bleſſes the endeavours of the righteous, and of thoſe who truſt in him; at leaſt ſo far, as to ſupply them with the neceſſary ſupports and conveniencies of Life. *I have been young, and now am old,* ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *and yet ſaw I never the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging their bread.* Which Obſervation, though it was indeed more univerſally true under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, than in the Goſpel-ſtate; yet even *ſtill* for the more part, *Godlineſs,* as St *Paul* declares, *has the promiſe*

1 Kings iii. 13.

promiſe even *of the Life that now is:* And our Saviour, through his whole Argument in the Context, ſeems to ſuppoſe, that Providence, which ſecretly directs and over-rules all Events, is particularly concerned to make proviſion for thoſe, who in the faithful diſcharge of their duty rely upon him. SERM. XVII.

2. WHEN this happens *otherwiſe*, (as in the caſe of *Perſecution* it neceſſarily muſt;) then from the Promiſe here annexed we may reaſonably conclude, that, what a righteous man loſes upon account of his Religion, ſhall by the Care of Providence be, Some other way, made good to him. *There is no man*, ſaith our Saviour, *that has left houſe, or brethren or ſiſters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my ſake and the goſpel; but he ſhall receive an hundred fold now* in this time, ------*with Perſecutions*; i. e. he ſhall either in the courſe of Providence be reſtored, to more than he has loſt; or he ſhall receive more than an equivalent in that peace and comfort and ſatisfaction of mind, that joy in the Holy Ghoſt, which ariſes from a Senſe of a good Conſcience and of the Favour of God.

SERM. XVII.

3. WHEN *neither* of theſe are ſecured to a man, (as they can only be affirmed for the *moſt* part;) then it may certainly be depended upon, that his reward *hereafter*, ſhall be ſo much the greater. *Uſually* he ſhall in the *preſent time* receive an hundred fold, *together with Perſecutions*; but in the End *infallibly* eternal life. It was a noble Anſwer to this purpoſe, (wherewith I ſhall conclude,) which the three children of the *Jews* gave to *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*, when they were commanded to fall down and worſhip the graven Image which he had ſet up, under pain of being caſt alive into a burning fiery furnace; *Dan.* iii. 17. It was propoſed to them to forſake the religion of their God for the Law of the King and the Religion of the country; and their Anſwer was; *If it be ſo; our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he* will *deliver us out of thine hand, O King: But if not*; (if he does *not* think fit to deliver us; *yet) be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the graven Image which thou haſt*

haſt ſet up. They depended upon God, if he did *not* think fit to deliver them from *temporal* Death, that he would recompence it to them with Life and Happineſs *eternal.* SERM. XVII.

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